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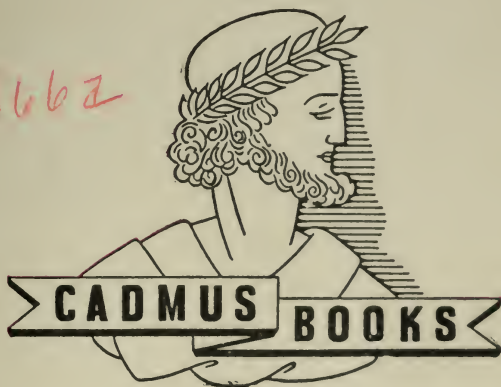
"HUSHEEN," SAID ALANNA, FINGER ON LIP

ALANNA

By
Helen Coale Crew

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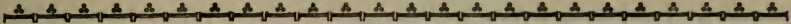
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Chapter One

Alanna was laughing. It was just such a peal as bluebells would make in the meadows if they had sturdy little clappers in place of tender, slender threads of stamens and pistils. Alanna's laugh was not loud enough to "raise the roof," but it was quite loud enough to make Black Molly, the cow, lift her head and turn her black nose in the direction from which it came.

"There she is now," said Alanna's mother, who was leaning over the stone fence talking to Mrs. McQuirk next door. You can see very well that the two of them, gossiping out there in the warm summer sunshine, had been talking about Alanna. "There she goes now, screechin' her head off over some foolish fancy. I give you my word, Mrs. McQuirk ma'am, I don't know what will become of Alanna at all!"

"She's good and willing," said Mrs. McQuirk, with a warm remembrance of the many favors Alanna had done for her. She had only to ask, "Alanna darlin', would you be runnin' over to Mrs. Kilfoyle's and ask her would she be lendin' me the loan of that pattern she was tellin' me of?" Or perhaps, "Alanna, would you just run over to the town and see is there a letter for me at the post office from my boy Danny, and God bless him away off there in America? That's a darlin'!" And before she knew it Alanna was back with the

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pattern, together with Mrs. Kilfoyle's instructions as to how it was to be laid on the goods, or she had returned from the town with a fat letter from Danny, or else with the smiling assurance that next time, surely, there would be one.



EYES THE COLOR OF BLUEBELLS

"Don't you worry, woman dear," went on Mrs. McQuirk. "She'll come out all right in the end. But if she was my child I'd feed her up, Mrs. Malone, and she lookin' so thin the wind would be blowin' through her if a storm came up. What with growin' so fast and all, they sometimes up and die on you, ma'am."

Mrs. Malone's heart skipped a beat with fright, and she left

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Mrs. McQuirk without so much as a good-by to rush indoors and clap eyes on Alanna to be sure she was still alive. Alanna wasn't indoors at all, so her mother came out again and went around behind the house, and there she was, hanging up baby Pat's little handful of wash on the clothesline, which was fastened to the pump at one end and to the pigsty at the other, with a clothes-pole propping it up in the middle.

Alanna hung up two little dresses of faded blue, a red-flannel shirt, and other little duds, all so tiny that they made you wonder whether a human baby even of the smallest size could wear them, or whether by any chance they belonged to the Little People. Alanna's own dress was no great size at all, being too short in the sleeves and too tight around the waist, for all she was so thin. She smiled at her mother the best she could with her mouth bristling with four clothespins. Her hair, hanging in two long braids over her shoulders, was as black as a black tulip, and her eyes were the color of the bluebells we were mentioning a bit ago. When she pulled the last clothespin out of her mouth she looked more natural. Then you could see that it was a pleasant mouth, grave enough, but ready to smile at a moment's notice. And I mustn't forget to say that her cheeks were almost as brown as the glossy skin of a horse-chestnut. Alanna knew a good deal more about the sun and the wind and the air of Ballycooly than she did about anything else.

"Alanna," said her mother, "whatever are you laughing over nothing at all for?"

Alanna's laugh pealed forth again. "I wasn't laughing about nothing at all, mother, I was laughing about something very particular that I was just a-thinking of."

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And then Mrs. Malone asked such a strange question that Alanna stared at her round-eyed. Asked her that question when it was neither breakfast-time nor dinner-time nor supper-time.

"Are you hungry, Alanna?" asked her mother.



"SAINTS KEEP US!" SAID MRS. MALONE

It is true that Patrick Malone, Alanna's father, was just now making good wages up at the Big House, helping the gardener in the busy season, and had his wages paid out to him every Saturday night; but, bless you, what with high prices and all and the potato crop none too good, being bitten with frost

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in the early spring, Mrs. Malone had to begin to pinch a bit as early in the week as Thursday. And this was Friday.

"Sure, I'm always hungry," said Alanna, simply. And indeed, what else could you expect, with Alanna twelve and a half?

"Didn't I see you give Larry some of your stirabout this very morning as ever was?" asked her mother.

"Well, you see, mother, Larry didn't have quite enough, and the kettle already scraped clean."

"Saints keep us!" said Mrs. Malone, and sighed and went indoors.

Alanna sat herself down on the edge of the stone trough before the pump and looked about her. Far off was the beautiful ring of the horizon, where the green of earth and blue of sky lay cheek to cheek. Here and there a great white cloud sat flat down upon the horizon, and here and there a forest lifted its trees up upon the blue. Between that far ring and Alanna lay rolling fields of yellow wheat and mustard, green barley and potatoes, with here and there the brown patches of the peat bogs. Across the country ran white roads, and afar off a river made a silver loop through golden grain. Behind the house—Alanna had to stand up and turn around to see this—the land rolled up, up, into a mountain, that was as free from being tangled up with other mountains as is the lovely Fuji in Japan. It may have had another name—I don't know—but everybody in Ballycooly called it Hillside. Part way up it, on a broad shelf of meadowland, was the Big House, where Colonel Fitzgerald lived with his sister Anastasia and his granddaughter Stacey.

Now when Alanna's eyes, in their traveling around her little

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world, at last reached Hillside, something in them changed. They quickened and brightened and sparkled, and she caught her breath—and let it go again in that bluebell peal. Tomorrow—tomorrow as ever was!—she would take a day off and climb to the very top of Hillside, and lie on the brown needles of the pine trees, and listen to the song of their green needles. When had she had a day off before? Not since little Pat was born, a good long seven months ago. Suppose mother wouldn't give her a day off tomorrow, and it Saturday, and the baking and all to do? Well, it would be very disobedient, but she would be up and away at the first streak of dawn. Musha me, what a day she'd have!

Alanna shut up all her visions of her day off in that safety-box she called her head, and went indoors to put away little Pat's clothes. Let us look about a moment before we go in after her.

Ballycooly is the name of this little group of houses, seven in all, strung along the road like beads upon a string. I know but of one other village in all Ireland that is smaller, and that is Ballymaureen, over in Tipperary County, which has but four houses to its name. Ballycooly is in Kilkenny County, and not so far from the town that is famous for its quarrelsome cats but what you could ride there in a jaunting-car in half a day. Perhaps you haven't been able to find Ballycooly on your map, and to tell the truth I haven't yet found it on mine. There are so many Ballys of one sort and another—Ballyham, Ballymote, Ballyhaise, Ballymacooly, Ballyneer and Bally-this and Bally-that till it's like hunting for one particular blackberry in a big blackberry patch to find Ballycooly.

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The seven houses of Ballycooly have apparently stood there by the roadside for centuries, and must be by this time well-rooted in the ground, in spite of the fact that not one of them has a cellar. There are two times when they do not all look exactly alike. One of these times is when one of them has a new thatched roof. Then the new roof, whether of oat or wheat, glitters in the sun like gold while the others are drab in comparison. Alanna, looking at a new and shining thatch, feels that the house under it has acquired a halo, like those of the pictured saints in the church in Town.

Another thing that makes a house in Ballycooly look different from the rest is a new coat of whitewash. And here again, in Alanna's eyes, the house is like a saint. For do not the saints in the picture wear fresh white robes? Sure they do!

But this particular summer one of the houses, and that Alanna's own, has been singled out and honored by nothing less than a miracle. When Alanna first saw it she plumped down on her knees and made a prayer of praise. It warmed and melted her heart entirely. Right up on the ridgepole of the house the lovely thing stood—six stalks of foxglove in a row, their feet in the thick dusty-golden thatch, their purple plumes lifted up into the sky. Alanna wasn't at all sure at first glance that they were not six green candlesticks carrying six glorious purple candles. And Alanna herself, in spite of her much-patched dress and a smear of molasses on one cheek (there had been a bit of molasses with the stirabout at breakfast), looked like a young saint with all that ecstasy in her eyes as she knelt there.

The Kilfoyle twins jeered at Alanna when they saw her

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kneeling there, and so did Larry, as he came in the gate and fell over her.

"Why wouldn't they be up there?" he asked. "Look at the two rows of foxgloves in the McCann's yard. You silly creature, sure the winds took the seeds from them and carried them up on the roof easy as easy! And that's all there is in it!" Larry went indoors, striding manfully and feeling superior. Alanna, who preferred feeling happy any day to feeling superior, paid no attention to him. Isn't a wind a kind of angel? It is that! And if an angel did the job it's a miracle, so there! That's as easy as two and two put together and they always making four, do what you will.

Well now, let us go indoors after Alanna, for the door is wide open and we'll not even have to knock. The house proper, that is, the stone part of it, is all one long room, and the floor is of earth, smoothed down hard and tight and as unyielding as iron. At one end is a great fireplace, and before that is a stone hearth. Sure, there's no trouble at all getting stone in Ireland; you could build a house out of what you get of sizable stones right out of the potato patch. It is easy to see that the family spends most of its time indoors sitting about the fire, for four stools and a cradle are arranged half-circle-wise about it. At the opposite end of the room stands a huge bedstead, its puffy feather bed covered by a patchwork quilt. Alanna had a share in making that quilt. You'd have no trouble whatever finding her stitches upon it. Mrs. Malone's stitches march like an orderly line of soldiers, but Alanna's dance about any-which-way. Oddly enough it's mostly the green patches that have Alanna's stitches on them, and that's

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because she begged to be allowed to sew in "a lot of little green meadows."

Between the two windows that are opposite to the door there is a big chest of drawers, tall, wide, and dark with time and use. Its drawers are full to overflowing (something is dribbling out of the bottom drawer this instant minute), and all sorts of odds and ends are cluttered up on its top. It has been handed down from mother to daughter for a good two hundred years, and it holds the Sunday garments of the entire family, as well as an odd quilt or two, the family christening-robe, and dear knows what besides. Everything comes out of that great ark. And if that is so, I suppose everything must also go into it. There's no magic about it, though sometimes it does seem magical (thinks Alanna, anyway). There was that time when Alanna had been wanting and wanting a bit of ribbon to tie on the end of each of her dark braids (there's only string on them now), and presto! one day mother went to the next-to-bottom drawer, brought out a little box, and out of that came two little lengths of narrow yellow ribbon. Alanna would have liked green, but yellow is not to be despised.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Malone with a laugh, "sure now I remember when your Uncle Peter that's in America sent your grandfather a box o' cigars—fifteen years ago, was it?—and these two little ribbons were inside it. It's the truth it is that a thing that's put away will come in handy some day. I mind your grandfather chopped up the cigars with his pocket knife and smoked them in his old pipe."

On this day, however, as we were looking about the room, Mrs. Malone opened the top drawer and took out her bonnet box, and from that drew her Sunday bonnet, a flat little arrange-

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ment with a black ribbon around it and some little purple flowers just under the rim in front.

"'Tis a little old contraption it is, and ready to fall to pieces on me," she said. "And will you look, Alanna, at the flowers is on it, all faded out that you could scarcely tell the color. Purple they were in the beginning, but that was before you were born."

Alanna looked at the faded flowers, her forehead knitted in thought. Presently she raised her eyes and looked out the open door for inspiration. All she saw was a blaze of sunny green background and Tim Riley going by with a spade over his shoulder. Tim was a tall lad of sixteen with red hair, a fistful of freckles across his nose, and a smile as cheerful as the rising sun. Only this summer he had gotten Alanna out of two scrapes and one lively scrap in which her two fists had done considerable damage on the saucy faces of the Kilfoyle twins. But Alanna looked through and beyond Tim, and when her eyes came back indoors again they had a sparkle in them. She pointed to the bunches of pennyroyal that only last night she had tied to the posts of the big bed and to the hood of the cradle to keep the mosquitoes away.

"Look at the little purple pennyroyal flowers, mother!" she said. "As like they are as two peas to the little flowers in your bonnet. Sure you can cut these old faded ones off with the scissors, and I'll run down to the bog Sunday morning, where there does be a big patch of them in amongst the bog cotton, and we'll pin them on your bonnet just before we start to church. Sure I think they'll keep fresh until Father Ryan gives us the benediction."

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"Alanna," said her mother, "it's the great ideas you do be having, child! We'll do that very thing!"

At this moment the cradle suddenly began to rock. No, it was not fairies was in it, but only baby Pat beginning to wake up. It rocked and creaked quite ferociously, and a great roar issued from under the hood. Alanna ran to the rescue and lifted little Pat from the cradle. Alanna's arms might be thin, but they were plenty strong when it came to lifting little Pat. Not a day in all his seven months of existence but she had lifted him, and according to what one hears, if she went on lifting him every day, why wouldn't she still be doing it when he was a man? He was far off from being a man yet, for all his bigness, the great fat omadhaun of a baby! Creases were his neck and wrists. There was scarcely space under his fat chin to tie his bonnet strings. A few reddish hairs stood up on the top of his head in a peak. There was a tear trembling on the brim of each blue eye, and his rosy mouth was still round from the shape of the roar that had just come out of it. He was warm and moist from sleep, and his little red flannel nightgown was crumpled. From under its edge protruded his two lovely feet and his two rows of adorable toes like beads upon a rosary, and quite as agreeable (thought Alanna) as any wooden beads to say your prayers upon.

"Put him in his cart, Alanna darlin', and give him a ride to the Town and fetch me a bit of tea from the shop, and any news you can pick up," said her mother, taking off the baby's nightgown and clapping a tiny dress upon him, as well as his bonnet upon his head.

Alanna fetched the baby's cart to the door with all the pride with which an old coachman used to open the door of the

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carriage when his mistress came stepping out the house door in her ruffles and laces and frills and parasol. Alanna had no fault to find with Pat's cart, a wooden box on two pairs of old wheels from a scrap-heap and a wooden tongue made by her father from a bed-slat.

"Here's sixpence," said Mrs. Malone, putting little Pat down into his cart until nothing showed above the edge but his small bobbing head. "Get me fi'pence worth o' tea and a penny box o' matches. Saints keep us, how fast the matches do go!"

Alanna put on her blue sunbonnet and her clean pinafore, took up the tongue of the wagon and started for Town, a mile or more away. You could see a few of its red roofs over a great boulder on the edge of the hill where the road turned a little. A mile? What's a mile? It may be a long length of concrete sidewalks, or of cobblestones, or of grass, or gravel, or even gray sea-water. For Alanna it was a pleasant little short length of country road, a bit of water over pebbles where it ran down to the bog and over, a climb up towards the blue sky until you reach the boulder, a twist around that, and then a straight line to the Town between pastures, where on one side cows lapped up buttercups and clover with curling tongues and chewed them sidewise, and on the other side sheep nibbled at the grass and tore it up with sharp little jerking bites.

Alanna never hurried to Town, unless it was on the days when rain was coming down in slapping bucketfuls or when snow blew across the pastures in little stinging spear-points that got into her neck and stung her cheeks and hung themselves upon her eyelashes. In the summer she loitered happily. She idled along. But what is idling? First of all, idling is a throwing away of worries. This leaves the mind empty, like

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a garret after a spring house-cleaning. Secondly, it is the leaving of the doors and windows of the mind wide open. And thirdly, it is the storing away in that empty space of bright pictures—the drifting by of a little cloud of white butterflies; the croaking of the frogs as they pass the time o' day in the bogs; the skim milk color of the sky; the larks lifting up like wisps of feathery song; thistledown floating lazily on the wind; the snowy drifts of dandelions that have put on their white wigs; the golden dust lifted by a drove of sheep coming down the road; the husky shouts of the shepherd boy—"Hi—ya! Hi—ya!"

Sometimes Alanna stood still, sometimes she walked slowly, but all the while these things and a thousand others were slipping into that empty garret of her mind and seeping down into the warm little sitting room of her heart, where they hung like pictures on a wall. Things get knocked about in garrets—maybe forgotten, maybe broken or lost. In that pleasant little room of the heart they never even need dusting, but are always fresh and lovely, like the "apples of gold in pictures of silver" of the Proverbs. Besides, you do not have to take any picture down that is hung there in order to hang another. And that is a glorious miracle that nobody quite understands.

Close upon the Town they were at last, when here came Larry running like the wind to overtake them, his bare feet leaping over the ruts of the road. He was panting, and long before he reached Alanna he shouted to her, as well as he could for shortness of breath.

"Mother says leave the matches be and get a penny o' sugar

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instead. She'll borry a match from Mrs. McQuirk, and here's a sixpence for flour!"

"What for is all that?" asked Alanna.

Larry had tossed the sixpence at Alanna, turned in his tracks, and was speeding home again. Over his shoulder he called: "Who . . . do you . . . think . . . has come?"

Alanna put her two hands about her mouth and shouted: "I don't think anything at all! Tell me quick!"

"Uncle Roddy!" shouted Larry, and was off like the wind.



Chapter Two

Uncle Roddy!" said Alanna to the baby. Little Pat smiled vaguely and fell to chewing his bonnet strings. Alanna, overcome by this sudden good news, sat flat down upon the dusty road. Wouldn't you think that those six foxglove plants upon the house roof were enough glory for one summer? And now on the top of that here was Uncle Roddy, come again from who knows what far-away foreign country. Uncle Roddy was Mother's own uncle, a sailor by profession, a musician by much loving practice on his old fiddle, and a maker and singer of songs by choice. That big seashell (did you notice it?) that holds open the house door on windy days, is one that Uncle Roddy fetched two years ago from the Indian Ocean. Alanna knows well where that is; she has traveled about over it by the tip of her forefinger on the map of Asia in the school geography. That was the time he came rolling up to the door sailor fashion, gave the door a knockdown knock, and cried "Ship Ahoy!" And when Father opened the door, and they saw him standing there with his sun-browned face and twinkling eyes and snow-white hair, and his wrinkles that ran one way when he was grave and every-which-way when he laughed—what a shout of delight went up!

As Alanna sat in the road rocking her body back and forth and thinking of Uncle Roddy, a sudden thought came

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to her which made her hold herself straight and stiff in anxious suspense. Sure, wasn't the house empty of food and the potato patch not yet ready to dig for potatoes? What would Mother feed Uncle Roddy on at all? Or how could Alanna herself buy enough, even leaving out the penny box of matches, to give Uncle Roddy a dinner? Presently an



GOATS FRISKING ABOUT

idea came, and up she jumped, and dragged the little cart as fast as she could to Town. Little Pat didn't mind the jolting. He was past caring for that, being all curled up on himself, sound asleep, with a thumb tucked away comfortably in his mouth. Alanna drew the cart to a tree at one corner of the Town Common, where children, goats, and dogs were frisking about, besides a cow or two. Taking off

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her pinafore she threw it over the box to keep the flies off Pat, and then she went to the long cobblestone street that ran uphill, and began climbing to the top. She was not idling now, and yet—can you believe it?—it took her two hours to get to the upper end of the little street. For, at a door here and a door there she knocked and asked, “Would you, ma’am, like your pitaties pared or your floor wiped or an errand run or a baby rocked to sleep, for a penny?”

Now the Town wasn’t what you would call a rich town, with everybody’s pockets full of money to spend, but it so happened that there were several busy women that were glad of a penny’s worth of help, especially when the helper was so cheerfully eager to do her best. And so when Alanna at last did reach the top of the hill, quite enough pennies were in her pocket—to say nothing of an odd farthing or two that had been “thrown in”—to jingle agreeably together. By that time she began to fear that little Pat had waked up, but even if he had, she must take time enough to lay out her money to the best advantage. She got a good-sized wisp of tea, a package of brown sugar, a round loaf of bread (Mother wouldn’t be baking till tomorrow), and a few potatoes. And bless you, the mistress of the store, hearing her story, gave her a cooky for Pat.

Down the winding street then, with her packages grasped tightly, ran Alanna, looking ahead to see the little cart at the first possible moment. And when she turned the last curve and the Common lay before her, to her horror a great red cow had its head in the box where Pat lay. Alanna was on the Common in no time at all, and seizing a stone, she hurled it at the great beast, hitting it square in the ribs. At once the

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cow lifted its head with a snort and went streeling across the Common with Alanna's pinafore on its horns.

By this time Alanna was weary, but she must rescue her pinafore whether or no. First she pacified Pat, who was weeping as anybody would with a great rasping tongue licking one's cheek. His little hands were clinging frantically to the edge of the box and his tears were rolling into his open mouth. Alanna gave him the cooky (minus the raisin in the middle, which she had eaten herself) and peace was restored. Looking at the cow, she saw it pawing off the pinafore, and presently she was able to pick up the rumpled, torn and dirty little apron which had been so fresh when she put it on. Back again now over the mile home. And how long that mile had become now! She looked neither to the right nor to the left, and so missed the loveliest sight the day had to offer—a little cloud of yellow butterflies fluttering up from a clump of buttercups, for all the world as though the buttercups thought themselves too yellow and were tossing away some of their golden hue. This little shining picture she might have hung in her heart, but she did not see it. Her whole being was focused upon the thought of home and Uncle Roddy.

Arrived at the seven small houses that call themselves Bally-cooly, Alanna hastened by the Riley's house and the Kilfoyles' and the Lallys' and the McCanns' and the Tracys'. Then came their own, and after that was Mrs. McQuirk's. Out of every little front yard she passed came a shout—"Hi, Alanna, your Uncle Roddy's come!" You'll know that when she came to her own gate her head was full of one thing only. She never raised a lash of her eye to look at the six green candlesticks and

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their six purple candles atop the house in a beautiful row. Think of that!

Thinks Alanna to herself, "I'll just be slipping up easy on my mother and giving her the things." And then she stopped to sniff the air. From the open door came a delicious fragrance of something cooking. Onions were in it. Maybe a bit of meat, too. Where did her mother get any meat? Alanna felt a little downcast, for now her purchases would not be so much prized. With little Pat under one arm and her packages under the other, she went in. And not a soul was in the room but a big man stirring the kettle on the fire and whistling like a thrush. The big kettle it was, that was used in times of plenty. The man turned and stared at Alanna, and Alanna put Pat down in his cradle and stared at the man.

"Uncle Roddy, is that you?" asked Alanna gravely.

"I kind o' think maybe it is," said the man. "Do I look like me?"

Alanna looked at the white hair and the brown face and the smiling wrinkles and said, "Yes, it is you for sure, Uncle Roddy, glory be!"

"And is it you for sure, Alanna?" asked Uncle Roddy.

"Yes, sir!" said Alanna emphatically. "And you are just in time."

"Time for what?"

"I'm going to run away tomorrow," said Alanna with a bluebell laugh. "First thing in the morning."

"And I'm just in time to prevent you?"

"No, just in time to go with me. Don't you remember, Uncle Roddy, how when you were here before we ran away

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for all day to the woods to see could we see some of the Little People dancing in their fairy rings?"

"Sure we did!" said Uncle Roddy, stirring the stew and waving the spoon at little Pat. "And I am for it again, Alanna darlin'. What time do we start?"

"At dawn, or before, maybe," said Alanna. She went to the fire and looked into the kettle. It was nearly full of stew. Now an onion bubbled to the top, now a potato, and surely those were lumps of meat at the bottom! "But we didn't have any meat," said Alanna.

Uncle Roddy smiled knowingly and winked an eye. "Sure, I unhooked a couple o' my ribs and threw them in. But how you've grown in two years, Alanna! You're all of a foot taller than when I saw you last."

At this moment voices were heard at the gate, and Alanna rushed to the door to see who was there. It was Mother and Larry with a basket between them. They had been to the potato patch and had "lifted" a whole basket of potatoes—not any too sizable, to be sure. Alanna, poised on the doorstep, lost her balance and tumbled backward in at the door.

"Uncle Roddy is here!" she cried as she went over, "and his ribs are in the stew!"

.

That evening they sat outdoors before the house, each one on a stool except Uncle Roddy, who had the chair. We didn't see the chair when we were looking at the room a bit back. No, it wasn't in the chest o' drawers (quit your laughing!) but just in the corner behind the big bed, where it wouldn't be sat on too much, and maybe give way entirely. It had been a fine chair once, and had had arms, and even rockers, for it

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was one of those American contraptions, and had been sent over by Uncle Peter when Alanna was a baby. "Over there in the old country (God bless her!)" wrote Uncle Peter, "the baby is the only one that gets rocked. But I am sending you something, my dear sister, that will rock both you and the baby at one and the same time." Well, the seat, legs and back were still left of it, but Alanna and Larry had worn the rockers completely off riding on them, and dear knows what became of the arms.

Just now Himself—that is, Patrick Malone—had a very good job up at the Big House. Mowing the lawns he was, till they were like velvet, and trimming the trees and bushes, and such-like work. But now, at the day's end, here he sat with little Pat on his knee and the rest of his family about him, as contented as you please. Herself was knitting a shawl, Larry was whittling a stick, and Alanna sat as still as any old owl on a branch and with eyes as big, listening to the tales Uncle Roddy was telling of his adventures. The long twilight had not yet come to an end. Stars were coming out one by one in the sky, and fireflies were swarming out of the thickets. Six of the little front yards of Ballycooly were full (and overflowing) with their families, but Widow McQuirk sat alone in hers, by reason of not having a chick nor child at home. Tim Riley was sitting on the rickety gate before the Riley house, and the smaller Rileys were swarming about, now here, now there. The Kilfoyle twins, for a wonder, were not getting into mischief. Mrs. McCann was trying to get her childer all about her, like a hen with her chickens. Mrs. Lally and Mrs. Tracy just said "blathers!" and let their childer do what

they would. But everywhere there was a feeling of expectancy. All of Ballycooly was waiting for something.

Presently Mrs. McQuirk called out over her fence, "Mr. Kilroy, sir, wouldn't you be so obliging as to give us the treat of a few tunes on your fiddle? It's the good man you'd be to do that!"

"I will that, Mrs. McQuirk, ma'am," said Uncle Roddy, "I've been aching and aching all evening to have somebody ask me that."

He rose up, as spry as spry, fetched out his fiddle, and stood up on the chair that he might be heard the better. Then he tuned his fiddle, tucked it under his chin, gave a few sweeps of the bow—and all Ballycooly sat stiller than still, with delicious thrills running up and down their spines. First he played a few of the tunes that everybody knew, and all Ballycooly kept time, each with one foot, and old Granny Lally tapped with her cane besides. Next Uncle Roddy played some sea-chanteys, and you heard the roar of the sea on a rocky coast, the echo of the tides in sea-caves, the straining of wind-filled sails, and the whistle of wind in the rigging. When at length there came a pause, Larry spoke up.

"Uncle Roddy, did you ever go down anunder the sea?"

Uncle Roddy smiled. "Anunder, is it? Sure. Listen now till you hear the mermaids dance!"

Then he shook back his shaggy white hair and sang a song of the strange life under the sea where mermaids dance among the strange flowers that grow in the sea-meadows. His voice was deep and clear, and the notes of his fiddle wove in and out among the words of the song like waves lapping on a reedy shore.

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"Och, 'tis dim
Below the sea!
Och, 'tis wet
As wet can be!
Och, the mermen,
Scaley, slim,
How they glide!
How they swim!
Och, the mermaids,
Slim and scaley,
Swimming smoothly,
Dancing gaily!

"Oh dance!
Oh dance!

"Och, the moonlight,
Pearly blue,
And the mer-folk
Weaving through!
Och, the bubbles!
How they rise
From their mouths,
From their eyes!
How their shadows,
Black and thin,
Follow after
As they spin!

"Oh dance!
Oh dance!

"Och, the wonder
Of it all!
How they bow

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And rise and fall!
How they twist,
How they turn,
Tangled in the
Green sea-fern!
How the eddies
Catch and twirl
All the dancers
As they whirl!

"Dance, little mermen!
Dance, little mermaids!
Dance, ye darlin's!
Oh dance!
Oh dance!"

Uncle Roddy stepped down from the chair and went indoors to put his fiddle away. There was a silence. Then, down in the Kilfoyles' yard the Kilfoyle twins took a twist and cried joyfully, "Oh, dance! Oh dance!" At once three of the young McCanns got loose from their mother's grasp and tumbled out into the road crying, "Oh dance! Oh dance!"

And presently there were all the children of Ballycooly in a great ring out under the moon, which had come up, very obligingly, while Uncle Roddy was playing, and all of them dancing merrily. And not one of them but felt himself to be down deep under the sea, with bubbles rising from his lips and cold little fish slapping his cheeks with silver tails. For as surely as Irish children have not the gift of money in their pockets, so surely they have that greater gift of lively imaginations in their heads. Mrs. McQuirk called out to Mrs. Lally and said, "The childer will be dancin' under the sea for a

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week, mark my word!" And Mrs. Tracy called to Mrs. McCann, "Begorra, we'll be in luck if they don't turn into mermaids, tails and all!"

When Uncle Roddy came out all of Ballycooly was getting ready to go indoors and go to bed.

"Where we'll put you to sleep at all, Uncle Roddy, I don't know," said Mrs. Malone.

Uncle Roddy looked out into the moonlight where it made a great splash of silver across a meadow where the clover and timothy had been cut and stacked, each haystack with a black shadow at its feet.

"Larry," said Uncle Roddy, "how many haystacks can you count in that field?"

Larry nicked off the haystacks on his fingers, and quick as quick said "Twenty!"

"Then," said Uncle Roddy to Mrs. Malone, "you needn't be worrying about me at all, at all! I have the choice of twenty beds."

"Herself will get you a quilt out of the chest," said Mr. Malone.

"Nary a quilt!" said Uncle Roddy. "A haystack for my bed, the moon for a candle, the frogs for a lullaby, and a pleasant dream to entertain me—how could I want anything more?" As he said this he walked out the gate. Alanna ran anxiously after him.

"Uncle Roddy, you won't forget to wake up early?"

"Not I! 'Tis true I'm a great sleeper, but I'm a great waker up into the bargain."

"At the very beginning of the dawn, Uncle Roddy."

"The dawn it is!"

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"I'll come here to the gate."

"I'll be here before ye!"

Then he went out the gate, crossed over into the meadow, burrowed into a haystack, and that was the end of him for the night.

As the Malones went indoors Mrs. Malone sighed. "'Twill be a long day's work tomorrow, Alanna. Be sure, we must all be up early. Do you whist that, Alanna?"

"Yes, mother," said Alanna . . . and shuddered. She knew that her words were no better than a lie. Her mother would need her help tomorrow, and Alanna had as good as said she would be right there to help. A lie right there with'in hearing of the miracle on the roof above her head. Why wouldn't the roof come crashing right down on her head to punish her? But after all, her heart lifted when she thought of tomorrow. She crept into her trundle bed thinking how all next week she would help her mother, working hard. She would work and *work* and WORK! Then, that load off her heart, she cuddled down comfortably saying to herself. "I'll just lie awake a bit and plan a little what we'll do tomorrow." In three minutes she was asleep.

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Have you ever been outdoors at earliest dawn? All the birds are becoming restless, and now one nest begins to twitter uneasily, now another. There is a chill in the air; the morning seems raw, as though it should have been cooked and wasn't. The wind-of-morning begins to run through the treetops and through the grass. He treads lightly, as tho' he had winged sandals upon his feet. He scarcely rumples the black water

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that lies in the bog holes. But at every leaf and grassblade he stirs, he whispers, "Dawn!"

Alanna crept quietly from her bed, slipped on her clothes and her little out-at-elbows sweater, put a slice of bread in each pocket of the sweater, and opened the door inch by anxious inch, lest the hinges should squeak. She closed it in the same manner, and hurried to the gate. There stood Uncle Roddy, waiting for her. Wouldn't you know that he would?

"Run in again, Alanna darlin', and fetch me out my fiddle. Sure I couldn't live a whole day without it!"

This time Alanna opened the door centimeter by centimeter, so fearful was she that this time she would be heard. But once more she was safely outdoors, with the fiddle, in its felt bag, under her arm. Uncle Roddy slung it over his shoulder by a strap on the bag, took Alanna by the hand, and O glory! they were off. Uncle Roddy had a bag of some sort in his other hand, but Alanna's manners forbade her to ask him what was in it.

They followed the road westward for a time, and at each step the light seemed to be a little stronger. Birds were really interested now, and said so plainly. A frog or two in boggy places also spoke their minds. "Ko-ax! Ko-ax!" they said in little husky voices, for ever since Aristophanes wrote his play, *The Frogs*, all frogs the world over have continued to speak the Greek language.

Presently they left their westward-wandering road and turned sharply north on another, and before very long the ground beneath their feet was rising. The long slope of Hill-side had begun. Alanna had nothing to say. For one thing, it did not seem proper to be talking when all the rest of the

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world was asleep. And for another thing, she was so excited that it would have been difficult to untangle her many and varied thoughts into speech. Uncle Roddy was quiet too, only pointing out something to Alanna now and then, or bidding her hearken to some unaccustomed sound. Now and then



THEY FOLLOWED THE ROAD WESTWARD

they passed a little cottage under the shelter of a stony ledge or on a windy knoll, but it was sound asleep, with its eyelids closed. Once a dog ran out and barked at them—then changed his mind. Once a bat (which hasn't enough mind to change) zig-zagged down from nowhere and brushed Uncle Roddy's face with its claw-tipped wings.

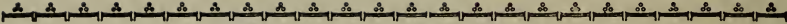
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Before long it was as light as day ever is without the sun. By this time they were quite high on Hillside, and were passing along the stone wall of the acres of the Big House. Clanelly House was its real name, but only its owners ever called it that. Here, over the low stone wall, they could peer through a yew hedge and see a great smooth lawn dotted with stately beeches whose long arms swept down and touched the grass with green fingers. Beyond this they caught glimpses of the house itself, and back of the house, the warm red brick wall of the sunken garden. Beyond the garden arose a knoll, crowned with tall pines. In the stables as they passed them there was a stirring, and voices calling to one another. And after that came the fields and meadows, rolling up the slopes. So they climbed on steadily, and at last the east began to glow.

"We must hurry," said Uncle Roddy, "and we'll get to that high point up yonder in time to see the sun come up."

On they went, leaving the road and climbing directly up the side of the hill. They mounted to the top and turned their faces eastward. Just in time! Far off, over a range of hills on the horizon, a slender rim of gold appeared. A minute more and the sun was looking over the edge of the world. Instantly shadows seemed to spring up from the ground and fasten themselves to trees, houses, posts, everything. In spite of their hurry each shadow attached itself to the right object. No house had the shadow of a tree, no haystack had the shadow of a cow, but everything was all in the proper order that Mother Nature loves and demands. Alanna opened her mouth to speak, when Uncle Roddy put his hand on her arm and whispered, "Listen!"

From somewhere behind them came the pitiful sound of sobbing.



Chapter Three

*B*ehind them was a pine glen, through which in level rays the light of the sun was piercing, making a golden gloom in the dusky interior of the glen. Uncle Roddy threw down his bundle and went quickly in among the pines, following the sound of that pitiful weeping. Alanna stood still, not daring to follow, but listening intently. Before long she heard Uncle Roddy's voice speaking with comforting cheer; she heard the sobbing cease abruptly; she heard two voices speaking together. Who could it be?

After what seemed a long time she heard Uncle Roddy calling to her. Instantly she turned and went in among the pines, carrying Uncle Roddy's bag with her. All the air seemed filled with a golden-green sun-dust. Under foot lay a soft and slippery carpet of pine needles. And in fairylike rings about the tree-trunks bluebells were swaying in the light wind. Alanna made her way to where Uncle Roddy stood talking to a tall boy whose shoulders drooped despondently. She ran to Uncle Roddy and looked up at the boy. In spite of the fact that his face was swollen with weeping and his eyes red, she recognized him at once.

"Why, Tim Riley, it's you!" she cried.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Uncle Roddy.

"Why, sure," said Alanna, "he's a Ballycooly boy. He lives

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in the last house as you go to town. Didn't you see him sitting on the gate post listening to your music last night? Whatever is the matter, Tim?"

"Let's go over to the east edge of the pines and have some breakfast," said Uncle Roddy.

Alanna felt frightfully embarrassed. "I brought only two slices of bread," she said, and added quickly, "I'm not hungry at all. There's no appetite on me after all that stew we had yesterday."

"I wouldn't wonder if we had plenty for all," said Uncle Roddy, smiling to himself. He led the way to a little hollow on the east side of the knoll over which two beeches hung their green and lovely screen; beeches that had come up from a group of their brothers below, and had settled themselves in saucy fashion among the pines. Here Uncle Roddy opened his bag. Alanna was all eyes to see what was in it, but everything was in little store packages and tied with string, so she didn't know much more than she did before. Uncle Roddy undid a box of matches and said, "You young ones stir yourselves and find some wood for a fire."

The very thought of action brightened Tim, and he went off with Alanna down the hill where they might find some oak and chestnut branches and twigs of underbrush, and back they came with two great armfuls, not any too dry, but anyway, 'twas wood. Uncle Roddy drew some hay from his pocket—a part of his last night's bed it was—and soon had a steady blaze. Then he took from his bundle a little tin saucepan, and bidding the two watch the fire, went off to get some water. When he had gone Alanna turned to Tim and asked

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whether the worst possible thing that she could think of had happened to him.

"Tim, is your mother dead?"

"No, thank God, she's well and hearty."

"Is anybody dead?"

"Nobody's dead that I know of, praise be!"

Alanna took his hand in her two hands. "Then why is your heart broken on you, Tim?"

"I can't go to school any more," said Tim, and he said it in the voice of one who had seen the sun go down knowing it would never come up again. He had another burst of tears, which he choked off manfully, and then he told her what he had already told Uncle Roddy. "Sure now I'm sixteen, and there's many a lad doesn't have the chance to go to school as long as that. But I've an uncle in Limerick County that has some tidy flax fields along the Shannon River. He has no children of his own, but there's me with his name, and so he's been helping along at home so I wouldn't have to leave off my schooling. But now didn't my father get a letter from the post office only yesterday from Aunt Biddy, saying that Uncle Tim was paralyzed, the poor man, and that no more money could come to us. I take shame to myself, Alanna, that I pity myself more than I pity Uncle Tim, but it's the truth. And now my father says I'd best be looking up a steady job." Here Tim stood up and worked the big muscles of his arms, "It's not that I'm afraid of work, begob! It's just that I have a craving for the books and the knowledge that's in 'em."

Alanna stood very still, thinking. She, too, was fond of books, and had long ago read all the books in the little book-

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case in the town school. To be sure, she much preferred the trees and hills and flowers and creatures—both two-legged and four-legged—to anything that books could tell you about them. And listening to old Granddaddy Tracy telling tales of things that happened when he was young was better than reading a whole row of books. But anyhow she could feel for Tim, the creature!

"My mother has a book," she said at last.

"Has she now?" inquired Tim politely. It might be only a cook book. "What is the name of it?"

"Nobody knows but mother, and she's forgotten," said Alanna. "It is in the big chest, all sewed up in a piece of red calico. It was Grandfather Malone's book once upon a long time ago. Mother says I'm to have it for a wedding present some day, but sure I'm a long way off from being married. But when I do be, I'll give it to you, whatever its name is."

At this point Uncle Roddy came swinging up the hill with his kettle full of water, and in no time at all it was boiling away over the fire. Then he opened his packages and there was tea and a bit of sugar and a small loaf of bread and some rashers of bacon. Wasn't that a breakfast fit for kings? He made the tea pretty strong, for he knew that Tim needed something to put new life into him. And while they ate he kept up a bit of talk, lively at first, and then steadying down to earnest advice for a young lad that craved a learning and couldn't have it.

"Mind ye this, Tim, my lad; there's more than one way of being educated. It can be gotten through books, to be sure, and nobody will deny that. But it can be gotten by a wide-awake lad even if there were not so much as a single book on the same side of the world with him. Ye may just put that into

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your pipe and smoke it! For he can get an education through his eyes, his ears, his mind and his heart, and begorrah, those four ways make quite a pathway, even if they don't happen to be the royal road to learning. Precious little book-learning have I had, as sure as my name is Roderick Kilroy, but I've got through the world, this way and that, and picked up some knowledge and a fine bit of understanding. I have hopes of you, Tim Riley. And in the meantime, here's a book for you, boyeen."

Out of his coat pocket Uncle Roddy drew a worn and battered volume, which he handled with loving care. "'Tis only a pagan book," he said, "but there's stuff in it. The saints themselves wouldn't be displeased and they reading it. It has been around the world with me, and has suffered shipwreck with me. It's all about a man that had difficulties spread thick in his way, and he took them as a race horse takes a hurdle. Put it in your pocket, Tim, and when the book-hunger comes on you, have a read at it."

Tim couldn't trust himself to speak, but he gave Uncle Roddy a grateful look, and put the book into his pocket. If you think Alanna didn't get a glimpse of it between one pocket and the other you miss your guess. Alanna's curiosity was as big as anything about her—except her heart. Her big eyes picked out the title with one flashing look. In faded gilt letters she read the title. It was *Homer's Odyssey*. Then she gave a glance at Tim. Slowly the unhappy look was fading from his face as they sat quietly about the fire. He had been warmed and fed and comforted. Sure, the world was not such a black-hearted place, after all.

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Alanna broke the silence. "It is wonderful how there do be so many little noises in such a quiet place," she said.

"I'll tell you what they are," said Uncle Roddy, taking his violin out of its bag. "Listen!" he said, and began to play and sing.

"Whist now!

Do you hear that lovely confusion

Of many and many little sounds?

'Tis the forest leaves

Holding green conversations;

'Tis the little brook

Falling headlong

In a merry hurry

Over little slippery

Brown pebbles;

'Tis the sweet echo

Of small bits of laughter

Where bright-eyed creatures of the woods

Are playing hide-and-seek;

'Tis the chime of bluebells

Dancing in a ring

About a tree-trunk;

'Tis the surprise

Of foolish honey-bees

That do be aiming at the

Poppies,

But bump into the

Foxglove;

"'Tis the noise

That's no noise at all,

Of little cold-nosed

Water-bugs

Keeping a loud silence

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In the black
Bog-pools;

“’Tis the voices of the pines
That stand upon the hills,
High in the sun and wind,
Thinking, dreaming,
Whispering. . . .”

At this point Tim rose up, his heart full of gratitude, slipped away quietly, and went off with himself down the hill, for he had a day’s job on the bogs at the peat cutting, and the morning was passing. Uncle Roddy laid down his violin, stood up, and called after Tim, “Good luck go wid ye, lad!” and Tim waved his arm and went on. Uncle Roddy and Alanna watched him go, and saw him swinging along at a good pace.

“The courage is in him again,” said Uncle Roddy. “And now, Alanna darlin’, we’ll be going on. I know a place where maybe there’s fairies in it.”

Well, I’d be a month of Sundays telling you of all the adventures that the two of them had that day; how they met an organ-grinder up from warm and sunny Italy with his organ and his little monkey, both of them blue with the cold weather they had experienced up in Donegal (where, you remember, “they eat pitaties skin and all”); how they ran across a little village fair, where they rode on a merry-go-round and ate American peanuts (which was like traveling in a foreign country, Alanna thought); how at a little farm away at the back of beyond the woman of the house gladly gave them a bit and sup in exchange for a merry jig of a tune, but who cried whole bucketfuls of tears when Uncle

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Roddy played "It's a long way to Tipperary," by reason of her boy Peter never coming home from the war at all; how they rescued a toddler from a ditch he had fallen into, and didn't the little rascal get a spanking from his mother for the trouble he had made her!

Then, in the very golden middle of the afternoon they came to the little glen where fairies might be, for wasn't there a fairy ring in the green grass? Uncle Roddy seated himself on one side of the ring, Alanna on the other. The glen was so overarched by great green branches that the very air seemed to have a green tint; and all that gracious and lovely green roof, dripping light here and there wherever there was a bit of space between the leaves for the sun to shoot his arrows through, was held up by tall pillars—the dark trunks of the elms and oaks, the slender white ones of the birches, the mossy green ones of the beeches.

"Hush!" said Alanna, finger on lip, looking big-eyed at the fairy ring.

"Listen!" said Uncle Roddy, and began to play softly on his fiddle such tiny melodies that would surely wheedle forth at least one fairy from its hiding-place. Alanna sat as still as still, not daring to move a muscle or take her eyes from the ring for one little minute lest she miss the least flutter of a gossamer wing.

Looking thus sharply, and with the soft music slipping into her thoughts almost unawares, she saw a grasshopper polishing off some of his legs with the rest of his legs; saw a black beetle airing his wings; saw a dragon-fly dart this way and that like a living jewel; saw an ant drag a dead butterfly across the ring; saw a caterpillar measuring the distance he was walking with

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little green loops—four loops around a stalk of grass and ten across a brown oak-leaf; saw a snail climbing a stone and leaving a delicate silver trail behind him; saw a swarm of little winged atoms dancing in a sunbeam; saw a spider spin a thread, hang it on the air, and climb its gossamer length; saw a bee emerge from the velvet throat of a flower. Little People, indeed! Are not these Little People? Alanna felt that the glen was a great green circus tent, and that all of God's funny little menagerie of the grass was circus-parading before her.

Presently Uncle Roddy began to sing:

“‘She wasn’t at school all day,’
Said the children of Ballycooly;
‘She wasn’t there at all,
Alanna, Alanna!’

“‘Father called all over the Town,
Mother called all over the house.
‘Alanna! Alanna!’

“‘Larry looked into the pigsty,
Father looked down the well,
Mother looked at the goat, and said she,
‘Have you seen Alanna?’
But the goat shook his beard,
And not a word out of him.

“‘Day went off with itself;
Twilight crept out of the thicket
Fetching a bag of fireflies;
Peat smoke curled from every chimney;
A little owl hooted from the ridgepole;
All the folk of Ballycooly called,
‘Alanna! Alanna! Alanna!’

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"Up comes old Roddy
With his ancient old fiddle
That could speak all the languages
That do be spoken
Across the width of the world.
'Whist now!' said he,
'Is it that little girl she is



UNCLE RODDY BEGAN TO SING

With the wild black hair,
And the big eyes on her,
And her mouth shaped as round
As a bit of laughter?

"'I'll warrant you that's herself!
Said the folk of Ballycooly.

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“‘Aisy now!’ said old Roddy.
‘Didn’t I come upon her unbeknownst
This very morning of the world
As ever was, and it raining
And raining and raining?
In the dark of the woods
It was I saw her, and she
Nipping up out of the rain-pools
A handful of little creatures—
Little fellas no bigger than my hand.’

“‘Och wirra, the Little People!’
Moaned the folk of Ballycooly.

“‘And she,’ said old Roddy,
‘Pinning them up on the branch
Of a willow tree.
Pinning them up with thorns, she was;
Pinning their wings to the willow bough;
Pinning them up to dry.’

“‘Saints keep us!’
Cried the folk of Ballycooly.

“‘Then,’ said old Roddy,
‘The sun came swaggering out
As big as you please;
And herself swinging the bough
To and fro,
To and fro,
And themselves drying.
But come with me
Out-along a ways,
And if so be Heaven is kind to us
We’ll find her.’

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"All the folk of Ballycooly,
Old ones, young ones,
Sick ones, well ones,
Went steppin' along
After old Roddy.

"It was night when they reached
The dark woods.
Sorra a thing could they see
Till the moon came prancin' up
As yella as a haystack
In harvest time.
By its light what did they see at all
But Alanna herself
Seated in the very middle
Of a pale green fairy ring;
And the little back of her,
Shoulders and all,
Was rising and bending, rising and bending,
Rising and bending,
In a way would put you to sleep at once;
And she a-crooning.

*"Cuddle ye down, darlin's,
Cuddle ye down!
The moon comes up
Prancin', prancin';
The stars come out
Dancin', dancin';
Sleepy birds
Are cheepin', cheepin';
Baby chicks are
Peepin', peepin';
O darlin's, darlin's,
Cuddle ye down!*

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"Then says she, snappy-like,
'There now, don't be crowding each other!
Lie down, will ye!' (Here a slap)
'Tuck in that wing, you littlest one!
Easy! Easy!
Shut down your eyelids,
If ye have any to shut.
Sure, ye're as hard to put to sleep
As my baby brother Pat,
The little gossoon!
Here, you! Where's your manners?
Be out of that wid yourself!
There now, take that!' (Here another slap)

"And now all the folk of Ballycooly
Came up close around Alanna,
And I give you my word
She had a little wriggling nestful
Of fairies in her lap!

"'What shall we do with her at all, at all!
Wailed the folk of Ballycooly.

"And then somebody—saints help him!—
Gave a sneeze the likes of which
Would blow your head off,
And all the Little People
Rose up off Alanna's lap,
And went up, up,
Like a curl of wavering smoke,
Out of sight!
Not so much as a bit of a
Downy wing left!

"'Heaven be praised!' cried
The folk of Ballycooly.

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"But Alanna stood up on her two feet
And let out a great screech:
'Where are my Little People!'

"Hush now, Alanna,
Hush now!
Cried the folk of Ballycooly.

"Then, betwixt them, somehow,
The folk of Ballycooly
Pushed and pulled and tugged
Till they got her home,
And no easy matter, I'm telling you!
Saints keep us, she had a spanking
First of all, for the bad luck
That would be coming
Because she had interfered
With the Little People.
Next she was clapped into bed
With a hot stone at her feet,
A hot posset down her throat,
And seven prayers about her head.

"And believe me or not,
'Twas good luck itself, chancey-like,
That came to Alanna.
For she, that could not before
Abide to rock little Pat's cradle,
Bless me, now would willinger
Do that than any other thing!
Always at twilight
She sits forninst the open window
Beside the cradle,
Lookin' out and lookin' out
As she rocks.

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"Only when it rains
Does she be uneasy;
And then her wild hair
Is wilder still,
And her eyes as big around
As the moon's very self,
And she looks away, away,
And listens. . . .
Is it the Little People's voices
She does be hearing?"

"Alanna! Alanna! Alanna!"

Whether Alanna saw the *real* Little People or not, who can say? When Uncle Roddy stopped playing and put away his fiddle and said they'd better be getting along, she rose up like one dazed, rubbed her eyes, and came back from some far-away place where her thoughts had been.

"Uncle Roddy," she said, "did I really have them in my lap?"

Uncle Roddy smiled the knowingest kind of a smile. "I wouldn't wonder," he said.

Alanna thought this over for a minute or two and said, "Well, anyway, when I do be hearing music I can see anything at all that I put my mind to."

"Sure!" said Uncle Roddy.

Then they slipped out of the glen and took the road that wound around Hillside, and after a while they were on the opposite side of Big House Place from what they were in the morning, and there was the sun dropping down low in the west. Coming to a gate, Uncle Roddy said they'd better cut through behind the sunken garden, as 'twould bring them

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quicker home. There was an apple orchard there, and they cut diagonally across that.

"Whist!" said Alanna. She had heard some one laughing—a young voice like her own, and very merry. Very different, indeed, it was from the sorrowful young voice they had heard that morning. And presently there came running through the orchard a girl about Alanna's size measuring from top to toes, but a good bit bigger measuring around her waist. A plump creature she was, with red rings of hair about her face, her cheeks round and rosy, and a generous sprinkle of freckles across her nose. When she saw Uncle Roddy and Alanna she stopped short, the smile slid off her face, and she looked very grave.

"Who are you?" she asked. She was speaking to Uncle Roddy, but she looked at Alanna. She saw a girl of her own age, but dressed in very simple clothes (if you can call clothes simple that had all the patches that Alanna's had), with great eyes looking at her out of a thin face. Alanna looked at her and saw the loveliest vision her eyes had ever had the great good fortune to look upon.

"Miss Fitzgerald, if that is you, tell your grandfather that an old playmate of his is crossing his grounds but making no trouble whatever," said Uncle Roddy.

Miss Fitzgerald turned around on the toes of her pretty slippers and ran back the way she had come, and Uncle Roddy and Alanna hadn't gone much farther through the orchard when here she was again, and her grandfather with her. The two men, both white-haired, looked at each other, and then Colonel Fitzgerald gave a big laugh and cried,

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"Well, if it isn't Roddy Kilroy, that rascally young spalpeen! And wherever have you been all these years, Roddy?"

"Around and around the world in ships," said Uncle Roddy, "and that's more progress than you've made, and you still in the same spot where I left you forty years ago!"

"And the little girl?"

"This is my great-niece, Alanna Malone."

"And here's my granddaughter, Stacey," said Colonel Fitzgerald. "Stacey, my dear, take Miss Malone with you and the two of you have your faces and hands washed, and then fetch her to the sunken garden for tea. It's ready now, I believe, and your Aunt Anastasia waiting for us."

Miss Malone! Alanna gave a bluebell peal of laughter in spite of herself as she and Stacey went to the house. And what a house! There was space in the great drawing room to hold the Malone house, lean-to, pigsty and all. Stacey conducted Alanna upstairs to her own room, where Alanna looked about her with her eyes wide open and her mouth opening wider and wider. I really don't know why one's mouth opens when one is astonished, but it does. And it works both ways. If you open your mouth your whole face will have an astonished feeling. Try it!

Stacey rang a bell and a pretty young maid came and poured water for them, and, when Alanna's face and hands were shining clean, unbraided Alanna's hair, brushed it, braided it again, tying it once more with the white strings. At least, they *had* been white. "Musha me!" thought Alanna, "if only I had put on my little bits of yellow ribbons this morning!" When they were both ready to go down, the two girls stood and looked at each other solemnly.

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"Wonderful fine eyes you have, Alanna," said Stacey.

"Wonderful fine you are from head to foot!" said Alanna warmly. And when you think of it, why wouldn't Alanna's heart feel warm at meeting another girl of her own age, and such a beautiful one? For in Ballycooly Alanna was the only girl of twelve in all the seven cottages. In the Riley cottage there was sixteen-year-old Tim and two little fellows no bigger than your thumb. In the Kilfoyle cabin there were Peter and Brian, the twelve-year-old twins, and little Pegeen who was only seven. The Lallys had two big girls of eighteen and twenty who were out in service, and small boys. Mrs. McCann's little Katie was only six, and little Tom and Anna were toddlers, while the baby wasn't even that. Thady and Rose Tracy had no size on them at all. So you can see very well why Alanna was so pleased with lovely Stacey.


The sunken garden was a thing of beauty on that late afternoon of midsummer. All about three walls tall hollyhocks in pink and red, and foxglove and larkspur in purple and white, stood in a stately row like so many sentinels. All within that line of sentinels the grass was as smooth as velvet. The fountain cast a spray lovelier than precious stones, and far livelier. On the north wall, looking towards the southern sun, peach trees spread their arms flat upon the warm red bricks, each a-clutch of a handful of ripening peaches. A great beech tree, standing outside the wall, threw over one end of the garden the shadow of a long outstretched bough. Here the tea-table stood, presided over by Aunt Anastasia and waited upon by a deft footman. The two men were already there when Stacey and Alanna came and took their places.

I couldn't begin to tell you how many buttered scones

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and little spiced cakes Alanna ate, or how many cups of tea, each with two lumps of sugar, she drank. Whatever the waiter handed her she took and consumed. Her eyes were now fixed on Aunt Anastasia's face, now on Stacey's. With her tea she drank in also the beauty of those two faces. She had not known there were such people in the world. Now in her thoughts the world was rapidly getting bigger and better. "If only Mother could look like Aunt Anastasia!" But Mother had no beautiful clothes . . . Mother had no time to sit and drink tea . . . Mother's hands were broken and disfigured with all the hard work she had done in the potato patch . . . Mother was working hard this very minute . . .

Here Alanna suddenly burst into tears.



Chapter Four

Alanna darlin', whatever is the matter?" cried Uncle Roddy.

"All day," said Alanna between sobs that shook her shoulders, "all day I've been streelin' about the world having the most wonderful time that ever was, and my mother has been at home working and working, and nobody to help her . . . nobody to rock little Pat . . . at all, at all!"

"Whist now, Alanna," said Uncle Roddy, mopping up her big overflow of tears with his blue bandanna handkerchief that had anchors all around the hem, "whist now whilst I do be telling you something. If you hadn't run off this day, and me with you, who would have found poor Tim and comforted his sorrows, I ask ye? Sure, if we hadn't gone up there on Hillside top at that early hour he might have been so gloomy in his mind as to go and hang himself on the bough of a tree."

Alanna stopped crying to consider this, and Aunt Anastasia asked, "Who is this unfortunate Tim?"

Uncle Roddy told the story of their meeting with Tim, and Alanna hastened to add that now Tim had one book, since Uncle Roddy had given him the Home Od . . . Od . . . och, she couldn't remember the name at all!

"Bless my soul!" cried the Colonel. "Whoever heard of a

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boy being fond of books? Usually 'tis the thing they'd fly from as if it were the plague. He puts me out of conceit of myself, this Tim of yours, for I've got a whole library of books, and when do I ever sit and read one?"

"Colonel," said Uncle Roddy, "do you recall the day when you tumbled into a deep bog-hole that was full of cold black water, and you going under and drowning and me pulling you out?"

"I do that," said the Colonel, with a laugh, "but what thanks do I owe you for that? If you had let me drown I wouldn't have had that terrible thrashing I got when I went home dripping."

"Well," said Uncle Roddy, "you ought to thank me! And you can do it now by letting the boy Tim come up at odd times when nobody's about and have a look at some of your books. But come now, Alanna," he hastened to say, lest the Colonel would think he must give him a promise, "we must be getting home at once. Sure your mother will be raging at us both, and we not there at supper time."

They said good-by promptly and left at once, Alanna with a last look about her at the lovely garden and the clean and beautiful faces of Aunt Anastasia and Stacey. Never again, she told herself, would she sit there surrounded by flowers and drinking endless cups of tea. But anyway she had a picture of it all in her mind and heart. She would never forget it. And as long as her skin felt rather uncomfortably tight she wouldn't forget all those scones, either!

"Alanna," said Uncle Roddy as they went, "what's to prevent you, my dear, from doing all the work a-Monday, and let your mother take it aisy-like?"

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"I will!" said Alanna earnestly. "'Tis just the thing! I will work hard all day Monday, Uncle Roddy, and that's a promise!" Alanna wiped away a last tear that hung upon her cheek. And so they hastened down the hill, took the sharp turn in the road, and at last saw seven wisps of smoke curling up into the sky over Ballycooly. The Ballycooly mothers were getting supper.

Mrs. Malone was inclined to scold at first, but when she heard the whole story she eased up. She was picturing herself calling next day on Mrs. McQuirk and Mrs. Tracy and Mrs. McCann and Mrs. Lally and Mrs. Kilfoyle and Mrs. Riley. "I'll go shankin' along the length of Ballycooly," ran her thoughts, "and I'll give them each an odd few words about how Uncle Roddy and Alanna were a-drinkin' tea with the Big House folks!"

Alanna, rocking little Pat to sleep that evening, had but one idea in her head, and that was to see Stacey Fitzgerald again, by hook or by crook, but just how it was to be done she could not see. Stacey was so wonderful! To think of there being girls like that in the world! So clean, so pretty! Alanna made a vow to herself that from now on she would keep herself as clean as she could. Even her fingernails! Even behind the ears! Burdened with this tremendous vow she fell asleep with her head on the hood of the cradle.

Early next morning she was startled out of her sleep by hearing Larry's voice roaring mournfully, "Mother, Mother, whatever do you think! Uncle Roddy has gone clean off with himself!" Larry, it seems, had gotten up very early in order to go out and see Uncle Roddy asleep under a haystack, for if he looked very comfortable there Larry was minded to try it him-

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self on the following night. And there was the great empty hole that Uncle Roddy had slept in, and there was the little tin saucepan, but himself was out of it entirely.

"It's his way," said Mrs. Malone. "He's as uneasy as the wind, blowing one way one minute and contrariwise the next. It's a flitterjig of a man he is! But leave him be; he'll be coming back again some day." Here Mrs. Malone shook her apron



"QUIT OUT FROM UNDER MY FEET!"

at four or five hens that had come indoors in the wake of Larry, and cried, "Be out of this, you little slieveens! Quit out from under my feet!" And the distracted hens hurried out, squawking as they went.

This being Sunday, the entire family went to church, Mrs. Malone with little fresh sprigs of pennyroyal in her bonnet, which Alanna had gathered for her, nodding in the soft breeze and not to be told at all from the flowers they replaced, except that they were of an unfaded purple. Alanna was very

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quiet all the way to the town, planning many things. In church she tried her best to pay attention to the service, but it was very difficult. At last, when the benediction had been pronounced, Father Ryan made an announcement. Tomorrow there would be a picnic . . . that was the word that caught Alanna's attention . . . to which everybody in the church was invited to go. It would be in Silver Glen. The young people could walk there, and jaunting cars, wagons, any vehicles obtainable, would take the older folk. . . . Here Alanna lost the rest, her heart dancing with delight over the thought of a day in Silver Glen. She had been there once, and knew the lovely place, tucked away among the hills and with Silver Stream running through it. Ferns grew thickly in the glen, and birch trees uplifted their delicate white stems on the hillsides. There were beeches, too, and a little girl could have a whole house to herself under the low-sweeping branches of one of them. You could also lie flat down among the ferns and look over the low banks of Silver Stream into its clear depths. Brown and white pebbles lay at the bottom, and little brown fish swept over them, drawing their shadows over the pebbles whenever the leafy tent overhead let in a fistful of the sun's rays. Indeed, you could hardly tell which was fish and which shadow. Also, if the sun was just right, you could see the reflection of your own face in the stream. And besides . . .

A terrible thought crashed into Alanna's head as if it were a stone that somebody had thrown at her. She had promised Uncle Roddy that *all day long on Monday she would work for her mother!* How then could she go to Silver Glen? She couldn't. By this time she found herself walking out of the church with the rest. Father Ryan was standing outside hav-

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ing a word or two with each and all. He smiled at Alanna as she came out, his kindly old face crisscrossed with wrinkles.

"Still believing in the Little People, are you, Alanna?" he asked.

"Sure," answered Alanna, and then asked him a question. "Father Ryan, you believe in miracles, don't you?"

Father Ryan just looked at Alanna, waiting for more. He knew that Alanna was like a bottle with the cork still in it. You had to wait for the cork to come out before the contents of the bottle could pour forth.

"I wish," said Alanna, "that a miracle could happen to me. I made a promise that I do not want to keep. I promised both Uncle Roddy and myself. Me, I wouldn't much mind breaking my promise to Uncle Roddy, because he isn't here and wouldn't know about it. But myself, I would know about it."

"Is it something I could know about?" questioned Father Ryan.

"Indeed, yes!" said Alanna. "Well, the truth is, Father Ryan, I went streelin' off all day with Uncle Roddy on Saturday, and I promised I would work all day for my mother on Monday."

"On Monday," said Father Ryan gravely, thinking of the picnic.

"On Monday," said Alanna with a sigh, also thinking of the picnic. "You don't know of any miracle at all?"

"No," said Father Ryan, "not any miracle that could get you to the picnic. But it would be a miracle in my eyes if Alanna Malone did not stick to her job."

"It would," said Alanna, and heaved another sigh.

Alanna trudged along the dusty road homeward without

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a word to anyone and with the garret of her mind completely shut up, so that not a bit of all that lovely day could find entrance there. And of course, if we knew Silver Glen as well as Alanna did, we could make allowance for her grumpy feelings. Even the hot potato and the cup of milk and the dandelion greens for dinner did not cheer her up. And when the rain came pouring down in the afternoon till you thought the entire world would be drowned in it, Alanna's tears fell, and by so much the world was a little damper than it should have been.

But Monday, when Ballycooly woke to see it at an early hour, was a darlin' of a day! Not a hint of any more rain in the sky. The sun came up like a golden guinea fresh from the mint, spending bright pennies of himself upon the world. Clouds as soft-looking as feather beds, and trimmed around their edges with bulging bits of their silver linings, sat about comfortably upon the blue of the sky. It was a happy-hearted sort of day, the kind in which things couldn't go wrong, howsoever much they tried. And such pleasant excitement in every Ballycooly household! In the Malone house mother was putting on her best dress and father, with little Pat on his knees, was trying to tie the family bib around the baby's neck with his big, clumsy fingers. Yes, family bib, that Larry had worn in his bib days and Alanna in hers, with lace all around the edge and a pink flower embroidered in one corner. Alanna took her mother's shawl from its hook on the wall and brushed it well to knock off any little slieveens of moths that might be on it. Larry, coming back from taking Black Molly to the pasture, gave his face a hint of a wash, and brushed his curly hair before the cracked mirror. "'Tis an odd little gob of a mirror," said

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Larry to his father, "wid the crack splitting my face into two pieces and they not fitting together the way I would be looking human at all."

By this time all of Ballycooly was ready to be off to Town to join the picnickers. Even Mrs. McQuirk went, rheumatism and all, and I give you my word there was not a soul left behind except Alanna, the poor creature. She stood at the door and watched them go. Do you think Granddaddy Tracy or Granny Lally didn't go? Why, bless you, Tim Riley was giving his arm to Granny Lally as far as the Town before he went to his work, and Granddaddy Tracy, scorning any help, stepped out like a man. Altogether it was a gay little procession they made. To Alanna, watching them through the tears that filled her eyes, they seemed to be dancing a jig as they went.

"I would be dancing a jig myself could I only be going along with them," said Alanna to herself. She watched them till they were out of sight around the big boulder, and then went indoors and looked about her to see where she had better begin her work. Musha me, what a sight the house was, to be sure! Would you believe it, two saucy hens had wandered in and were on the table itself, eating what was left of breakfast, and another hen had that very minute laid an egg in little Pat's cradle and was clucking its foolish head off with pride. Little Pat's clothes lay in a ring on the floor, along with Larry's old stockings, potato peelings, matches, ashes from the hearth, and a newspaper that Patrick Malone had brought down from the Big House, and which he had been reading at a snail's pace, with a finger pointing at each word as he read. What a clutter, to be sure! Alanna looked at it all with war in her

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eyes, and began at the very beginning by driving the hens out with the broom.

After that she picked up everything off the floor, made the beds, and pushed her trundle bed under the big one. Then she swept the floor, and by that time she was as zealous for work as that vigorous-looking woman who chases dirt around and around a little tin can. (Whether she ever catches up with it, who can say?) Alanna's eye became more and more critical, and when she had done, she concluded that she had really only begun.

"I wonder would I best be washin' the windows?" she thought, and went at them at once. There were only two of them, and they were small, but how they did let in the sky when they were done! After that she laid a fire in the fireplace and wiped up the hearth.

"It will be hungry they'll be and they coming home," she thought. "Maybe I should lift a potful of pitaties." Up she snatched the big black kettle from the hearth, went for the spade in the lean-to, and so made her way to the garden patch, "back beyond." Alanna had never lifted potatoes before, but she had often seen her mother do it, and knew what great care should be taken not to cut into a potato with the spade. By the time the kettle was full she was tired. Nevertheless she washed them at the pump, dried them with an old rag, and carried them indoors, before she sat down for a brief rest.

Glancing up as she rested, she saw many cobwebs hanging from the ceiling beams. Not nice clean cobwebs, such as you see spread upon the grass on early mornings, and beaded with tiny drops of dew, but very dusty and disreputable-looking cobwebs, that had been hanging there since dear knows when.

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Up she jumped and swept them away, bringing down a rain of spiders about her head. These she beat at with the broom, and then must needs hurry with the broom to the pump and wash it clean.



"MAYBE I SHOULD LIFT A POTFUL OF PITATIES"

Was that the end of her work? No, not yet. Looking at the cupboard with her head cocked on one side, she asked herself, "Would I be cleaning the cupboard, or wouldn't I?" The answer was, she would. And when the cupboard had

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been scrubbed clean, she couldn't, of course, put back the odds and ends of dishes without washing them. The plates, which were cracked and nicked, she put on the back of the shelf, and the cups she arranged in a row before them. Larry's cup, that had "Think of Me" on it in gilt letters, she placed in the very middle—the place of honor. Her own cup had a pink band around it, but father's and mother's cups were as plain as plain. On a lower shelf she placed the platter, the dish, and the two yellow bowls. Alanna backed away from the shelf to a respectful distance and admired all this glittering array of clean crockery.

There were only two pictures on the walls, but both were in fine gilt frames that had long lost much of their gilt. One was of Queen Victoria, and one of Saint Cecilia, but as both had gold crowns on their heads, you really had to look close to see which was which. They had belonged to Grandmother Malone, and Time, who is kind in some things, had been rather unkind to them. Alanna dusted them with great pride. It wasn't everybody in Ballycooly that had two fine pictures like those. The Lallys, poor creatures, had no pictures at all, unless you would count a few cut from newspapers.

At this point Alanna went to the door and looked at Ballycooly, from Mrs. McQuirk's house on the west to the Riley house at the far eastern end. If only the picnic would last a week she could clean up the entire seven houses! It would be as easy as easy! Then she looked up at the six stalks of foxglove on the ridgepole of the house, and wondered whether she ought to get a ladder and climb up and dust them, too. You can see by that what a perfect rage for cleaning she was in. And she really was just about to go and get Mrs. McQuirk's

ladder—the only ladder in Ballycooly—when who should she see coming along the road but the Kilfoyle twins. Of course, she knew at once that they had misbehaved somehow or other at the picnic and had been sent home.

“What was it ye did that they sent ye home for?” she shouted as soon as they had reached the first house in Ballycooly. If Alanna had lived on a Kansas prairie instead of in a little village tucked between hills in Ireland, her voice would have rolled across the prairie like a long roll of thunder. But Brian and Peter did not answer her at once, for they were having a bit of a fight over something. Alanna couldn’t see what it was that Brian was trying to take away from Peter. Something white it was. Not a handkerchief, no. There weren’t many handkerchiefs in Ballycooly. Not always enough to go around on Sundays when you went to church, and so the bigger children were held responsible for the little noses as well as their own. Heaven help the twins, was it a letter they were mistreating in that way? Look now, Peter has dropped it in the dust! It was a letter, sure enough. They’ll have it torn, the omadhauns! Like an arrow from a bow Alanna flew to the rescue.

Brian and Peter were big husky boys of twelve, and Alanna did not dare to push in between them when they were fighting. But she had a ready tongue and by scolding, wheedling, and at last promising them a dinner if they would stop all the fuss and behave themselves and give her the letter, at last they agreed. When she got the letter it was crumpled and dirty, but she was easily able to read the address on it.

“It’s for my mother!” she cried.

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"We knew that," said Brian, and the two lads winked at each other and laughed.

"There's mischief in the wind," said Alanna, looking at them sharply.

"There is," said Peter. "We only did all that fussing to get you to give us something to eat."

The three of them laughed together, and Alanna said, "Well, we'll have to eat outdoors, for neither of ye shall put foot into my clean house. Go over there in the field across the road and build a fire, whilst I put the letter in a safe place and fetch some food."

Alanna put the letter in front of the little American clock that stood on the big chest of drawers. There was an "alarm" upon the little clock, and once Larry, seeing little Pat in his cradle playing with the clock, set the alarm for a minute or two ahead and gave it back to little Pat. When the alarm went off little Pat set up a most piteous howl, and it took the rest of the day to pacify him, the little gossoon! Alanna glanced about the clean and orderly room with pride, and then, with three cups, three potatoes, a bit of tea and a bit of salt, went out to join the boys across the road.

When at last they were eating the baked potatoes and drinking the tea, the boys explained to Alanna why they had been sent home. It seems that there had been great milk cans taken along, some containing milk, others lemonade, and these had been set down into a quiet place in Silver Stream, a little pool that the stream filled as it went on its way, under a group of poplars. Here the milk would keep sweet and the lemonade cool until they were wanted. Now strange as it may seem, when Brian and Peter, wading up the stream, saw the tall

cans sticking up out of the water under the poplars, they immediately became frightfully thirsty.

"Och, just let's have a sup!" said Peter.

"We'll do that!" said Brian.

The two boys waded into the pool. Peter seized a can, but at the same time lost his footing in the slippery mud at the bottom of the pool, and over went the can. Its top came off and floated away, and several gallons of white milk poured out into the stream.

"And then," said Peter to Alanna, "what did that old milk do but go floating down the stream, and old Granny Rafferty sees it and gives a screech, and we couldn't get away fast enough, and home we were sent, and that's the truth."

The dinner over, Alanna dismissed her guests promptly, for she had something else to do—something that had flashed upon her as she looked at Brian and Peter's faces, still clean from the extra scrubbing they had received that morning in honor of the picnic. Having cleaned up the house, she would clean herself up. Washing and putting away the cups, she set about to wash herself at the pump. But the mirror over the chest of drawers, although cracked from side to side, (like that of the Lady of Shalott) showed her very plainly that cold water would never do the job. Hurriedly she carried the kettle of water to the still hot ashes of the fire across the road and set it into them, banking the ashes up around the sides of the kettle. And glory be! When she washed with this and a bit of soap and some very energetic scrubbing, she came out shining-clean and glowing. Then she brushed her hair into beautiful glossiness, braided it neatly, and tied it with the

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yellow ribbons. Well, wouldn't you? It would have been a shame entirely to be putting strings on that neat hair.

For a while she looked longingly at her Sunday dress hanging on its hook, but no, that would never do. Instead she put on a clean, faded, patched calico, and over that her one white apron. Standing in the middle of the room so that she might swing around and survey it all, she felt a warm glow at her heart.

"Being good and being clean is the same feeling," she said aloud to her image in the mirror. Then she went off to fetch the cow home from pasture and milk her, for the afternoon was waning now, and she must have everything ready for the home-coming folks. She walked along as in a dream, for her discovery of the relationship between goodness and cleanliness had been rather startling. Quickly she drove Black Molly home, milked her, strained the milk and poured it into various little cans and pitchers, leaving one at each door in Ballycooly. For Black Molly was a community cow. There were eight shares in her. Each house owned a share, and the Malones had the extra share for taking care of her.

Meanwhile Father Ryan left the picnic early, and for no less than three reasons. First, being old, he was getting tired of the excitement. Second, he felt uneasy about the two boys he had sent home, lest they had gotten into far more mischief than upsetting a can of milk. And thirdly, he wanted to see if Alanna was happy and busy about her work, or whether she was crying her eyes out, the creature! Nobody at the picnic saw him leave, he slipped away so quietly. Nobody saw him trudging rather wearily to town in the hot afternoon sun. But when he had passed through the town and was on the

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road to Ballycooly somebody did see him. An automobile coming along behind stopped as it came abreast of him, and there was Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Wherever are you going at this time of day, Father Ryan?" asked the Colonel.

"Only to Ballycooly," said Father Ryan, getting into the car and sinking back comfortably on the soft seat.

"I'm going across the river to Kells, myself," said the Colonel, "but I've a note from Stacey to the little Malone girl I promised to leave at the house. It will be an empty village, I fancy, with everyone at the picnic."

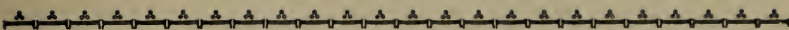
"Alanna will be at home," said Father Ryan.

They talked together on the most-talked-of subject in Ireland—the crops. The wheat was all shocked now, all over the country, and the barley was coming along well, and when did you see such fine pitaties, considering the early frost, in your life? Praise be, the people wouldn't be hungry next winter. Already the people were piling up their turf stacks to be ready for the first cold weather. And presently they were in Ballycooly and the chauffeur stopping at the Malone house.

"Give me the note," said Father Ryan, "and I'll give it to Alanna."

As he spoke Alanna came and looked out the door. Could that be Alanna? Who else, indeed? Look at that shining, beaming face! Look at that smile!

"Father Ryan," said Alanna, her eyes dancing with delight, "would you and the Colonel be steppin' in a bit whilst I would be wettin' up a cup o' tea for ye?"



Chapter Five

Colonel Fitzgerald and Father Ryan looked at each other, smiled at each other, winked at each other, and accepted Alanna's invitation. In no time at all they were seated in the Malone house, one on the chair (and I'll leave you to guess which one) and the other on a stool. Alanna started the fire, put the kettle to boil, and brought four cups from the cupboard. Four? To be sure! You didn't think, did you, that the chauffeur wouldn't be thirsty? And thanks be to goodness Uncle Roddy had left a little package of sugar behind, and everyone was soon drinking a cup of sweetened tea, and that, as you know, is the height of luxury in Kilkenny County—and no doubt in other counties as well.

You should have seen Alanna pouring the tea and putting in the sugar! She was very intent upon it, for it wouldn't do, before such fine company, to spill a drop, or knock the cups together, or tip over the little bowl (for lack of a pitcher) that held the milk. And while pouring she imitated Aunt Anastasia's manners as perfectly as possible, even to sticking out, in a delicate curve, the little finger on each hand. Colonel Fitzgerald, seeing this, couldn't for the life of him refrain from bursting into a great roar of laughter. Alanna was by no means offended at that, for she joined in with a peal of laughter of her own. Well, of course, Father Ryan couldn't resist

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all that merriment, and added his kindly, rumbling laugh. And the chauffeur, knowing a good joke must be going on, indulged in a pleasant grin all to himself out there in his car. Of course, you think now that that laughter could not spread any wider. You are mistaken. There was a little backwash ripple of it from the Kilfoyle twins, who were not far off, and indeed it would have gone all through Ballycooly had the Ballycooly folk been at home.

Alanna sobered down at last, and said very soberly, "Well, it pays to be clean, and that's the truth. If I hadn't scrubbed the house and the windows and the cupboard and myself and everything, I wouldn't have had the face to be asking you in to tea. Get out of there, will ye!"

No, don't be alarmed. It was only to an old hen that had hopped to the doorsill and was cocking her eye inside for crumbs that Alanna made that last remark.

No good thing can, of course, last forever, and presently the guests were gone, the Colonel in his car to Kells, and Father Ryan to the Kilfoyle cottage to see what those rascally twins might be doing. He didn't find them at home, however, for the truth is they had slipped into Larry's little bedroom in the lean-to of the Malone cottage, and were listening at the crack of the door to hear what was going on at the tea party that Alanna was having, with fine people, and fine talk going on.

Alanna, meanwhile, sat down to read Stacey's note, and found it to be an invitation to her to go to the Big House on Wednesday afternoon and take some sewing, so that she and Stacey might sew while Aunt Anastasia read aloud to them. That sounded pretty fine to Alanna. The only drawback was that she had nothing to sew. Her mind revolved and revolved

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around this question. Finally she concluded that she would tear a little slit in something, and she could then be mending that while Aunt Anastasia read. But what to tear? Well, sure now, why not the family bib? Just the thing!

Alanna suddenly began to feel very tired. Her arms ached; her shoulders ached; her feet ached. And there were the tea-cups to wash and put away. But musha me! she couldn't keep her eyelids open long enough to do that. She would just lie down on the floor for a bit of rest. The floor was nice and clean. Down she lay, her cheek on her arm, and closed her eyes. A bee bumbled in and bumped around, knocking his shins on walls and ceiling, with not enough sense to bump out the wide open door. Bump! Bump! Buzz! Buzz! The sound was like a lullaby.

"It pays to be clean," thought Alanna sleepily, "but somehow it's far more tiring than just being plain dirty." Her eyelids closed. She turned over with a sigh. She was sound asleep.

She was still asleep an hour later when the Ballycooly folks began to come streelin' home from the picnic. It had been a glorious day, and everybody had consumed much more food than they needed. As a result they were all tired and fractious. Fractious? I think the word must mean that their tempers were no longer "integers," but were reduced to "fractions."

"My back is broke on me!" cried Mrs. McCann, as she turned in at her door and dumped little two-year-old Anna into her cradle, with little Tom and Katie following in her wake shedding big tears that rolled in warm torrents down their sticky cheeks. Mrs. Tracy and the little Tracys were in no better shape. Mrs. Kilfoyle, having been short two children

by reason of the twins having been sent home, was not quite so weary. Mrs. Lally had her two little boys riding pickaback on her two hips (or should I say pickahip?). But Mrs. McQuirk, having no small children, had it aisy, and was walking along as peaceable as an old cow in a pasture, and as cool as a cucumber, as she herself declared. Mrs. Malone, with that lump of a little Pat in her arms and he screaming his head off, and Larry not having taken any care of him all day long but just climbing about the hills of Silver Glen as nimble as a four-legged goat while she herself had the baby to look after every single minute—well, you can see that Mrs. Malone wasn't in the very best possible temper herself.

"Will ye look at that!" she cried when she entered the house and saw Alanna sound asleep on the floor and the fire out and no supper ready. "What have you been doing at all, all day long, Alanna, that there's no supper ready, and me with my feet fallin' off me, and not even a fire?"

She sank down on a stool, Pat and all, while Alanna jumped up, rubbed her eyes, and gazed at her mother confusedly, not yet quite awake.

"What have you been doing all day?" repeated her mother.

"Look!" said Alanna, and waved her arm about. "Can't you see, mother?"

"What would I be seeing?" said her mother, "but the dirty dishes on the table, and the chickens streelin' around everywhere, and no fire lighted and no supper ready and me ready to drop."

Alanna was stunned. She looked about the room. Where was that beautiful shining order she had worked so hard to put upon the house that day? Sure enough, the chickens had

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come in again, and more than that, so had Mrs. McQuirk's old nanny's two little kids, and at this moment were frisking their absurd little tails in the ashes of the fire that had gone out for want of another sod of turf put upon it. You wouldn't think the floor had been swept in a month. The bee was bumbling hollowly in a teacup that was sticky with sugar. Alanna put her head down upon the table in the midst of the remnants of her lovely tea party and burst into tears.

At once Mrs. Malone's voice slipped out of its fretful tone and into one of warm sympathy. She tumbled poor baby Pat into his cradle and put her two arms about Alanna.

"What is it at all that's hurtin' you, Alanna darlin'?" she asked. "Wipe your eyes, child. There now. What is it at all?"

What Alanna wanted to say was, "Why, mother, don't you see that the windows are clean, and the pictures, and the closet, and don't you know that I would have had supper ready only that I was so tired I fell asleep?" But her heart was too full-to-overflowing with a new and dismal piece of hard-earned knowledge to waste any breath. The words that tumbled from her were few, and mixed with sobs.

"If you want to be clean you can't ever leave off a-cleaning, can you, mother?"

"You can't, indeed," said her mother, suddenly and energetically ridding the house of chickens and kids, starting a fire, filling the kettle, giving Pat a cup of milk, in her usual brisk and busy way. "Believe me, Alanna my dear, I'm glad to get home. Work, is it? A body doesn't mind work at home, once you get a-going. But this picnicking, that's what kills a body! Saints keep me from ever going to another!"

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An hour later peace reigned. Pat was asleep for the night, Larry was humbled, Alanna's heart was eased, father was home, and they were sitting at supper with a hot potato on each plate, while from every cup arose a delicate swirl of steam and the fragrance of new-made tea. Mrs. Malone had told her story of the picnic in a steady stream of words; Larry had told his in sudden spurts and interjections. And now Alanna had told hers, and here were her father and mother beaming upon her with pride because she had so capably extended the hospitality of the house to Colonel Fitzgerald and Father Ryan.

"'Tis a fine little woman you are, Alanna," said her father. And having given utterance to this fine bit of praise he drew his chair to the fire and smoked his pipe, adding its silvery smoke to the dark peat-smoke as they went up the chimney together. And not another word out of him all the rest of the evening.

Well, it wasn't until Mrs. Malone said, "What time can it be getting to be?" and looked at the clock, that Alanna remembered the letter. At once she jumped up and got it from where it stood against the clock face, and handed it to her mother.

"Mercy me!" cried Mrs. Malone. "A letter from America, is it? There might be bad news and all. Open it, Alanna. I haven't the courage. We haven't had a letter these two years past." She shook her head dismally, foreseeing trouble.

"It's from Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter in Baltimore," said Alanna.

"Who else would it be from?" said Mrs. Malone.

Alanna read it aloud. It was a wonderful letter, barring a little odd-looking spelling, and a sentence or two that

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wouldn't parse very well. Even Alanna was aware of these shortcomings, for Miss Ellen McGrennigan, the school-teacher at the town school, had caused many tears in the school-room by her strictness in demanding that all sentences in all compositions should be capable of being parsed. And while the letter was written and signed by Aunt Judy's own hand and pen, many of the sentences began "Myself and Peter think . . ." Myself and Peter thought, for example, that times were not so bad now the war was over, praise be, and they had been able to put away quite a tidy sum in the bank, and they wouldn't be surprised if in a couple of years or so they would be able to buy a little house out on West Biddle Street, now they were getting old and not being so spry at working their little farm or in getting their stuff to the Lexington market. A cold ride that was in winter and they starting at five o'clock of the morning every Tuesday and Saturday, to be ready for customers by seven. The little house they had in mind had a small shop on the ground floor, and they could lay in a little stock of odds and ends—drygoods and such, and tobacco for the men, and a few sugared sweets for the children, all-day-suckers and such. Reading this last sentence Alanna had to stop and lick her lips, making a complete circle around with the tip of her tongue, and Larry followed her example.

Also, Myself and Peter were in good health, praise be, and might live a long time yet, but they were getting lonesome now, with the only two children they ever had lying in their little graves in the cemetery. Here Aunt Judy lost the thread of her story by stopping to tell how, years ago when those little graves were new, they had had a little glass-fronted box put at the head of each, placing in that one on little Judy's

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grave her china doll and her favorite book, and in little Michael's his wooden sojers and his jackknife that had a handle in the shape of a dog running. But soon she came back again from the cemetery and arrived at the main point of her letter—its very reason, indeed, for being written.

Myself and Peter, it seemed, were so lonely that they were longing for a young person in the house to make things cheerful. Perhaps Sister Anna (Mrs. Malone, that is) could spare one of her children, for a few years anyway, say in a couple o' years' time, to come to Baltimore and live with them. If so, they would send the money for the passage across the ocean. A likely boy or girl would soon be earning a nice sum at some job or other, and be sending a few shillings home from time to time. 'Twas a great country to be earning money in, was America. And Baltimore was the grand little town. And how old was Alanna now? Or Larry? Send either the one or the other, and in a year or two. They didn't want too young a child that they'd have to be traipsing around after.

Alanna's heart turned a somersault in her bosom. "Saints keep me," went her thoughts, "and don't let my mother be sending me away from home to strange furrin countries!"

Larry's heart gave a wild leap and tugged at the strings—or whatever they are—that kept it fastened inside the cage of his ribs. His thought was, "Oh, glory be! If it's me I'll be traveling across the ocean in a ship and seeing furrin places and strange people and everything!"

And while two young hearts were thus acrobating in two young breasts, the two faces—Alanna's and Larry's—had no more expression on them than if they had been made of wood. They simply blinked at each other, gulped, and that was all.

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"Mercy me!" said Mrs. Malone, who was very much upset at the idea of anybody, sister or no sister, asking for one of her children. "'Tis no time at all to be talking about it. Midnight will be upon us before we know it. Get to bed, Larry, and mind you're up early in the morning. Pull out the trundle bed, Alanna, and hop into it. And not a word out of either of your heads! I'm that shook up I don't know whether I be standing on my feet or my head!"

So at last the house of Malone was all a-bed, but not asleep. Alanna, in her excitement, had forgotten to pull out the trundle-bed from under the big one, but lay there in the dark, her face turned up towards the slats of the big bed, her wide-open eyes seeing only a lonely little girl putting the ocean between herself and all she loved. Och, it couldn't be done! Larry dropped into his bunk in the lean-to, laughed a little to himself, felt the edge of his pocket knife—you don't know what may happen in strange countries—and fell asleep without at all meaning to. But herself, the mother of those children one of whom might be taken from her, lay long awake. Her first thoughts were of her sister Judy, who had only two little graves in the cemetery; her last thought was of herself, with an ocean full of wet water between herself and one of her little brood.

Do you think that on the next day Aunt Judy's letter was talked over? Not a bit of it. Everybody was thinking of it, to be sure, but for days and weeks nobody so much as mentioned it. Life in the Malone household went on as if the letter had never been received. Mrs. Malone put it away in the chest of drawers, out of sight if not out of mind. Wouldn't she be answering it soon? Not in Ballycooly, where there's no

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haste about anything. Maybe in a year's time or so, if she felt so inclined, Mrs. Malone would say, "Och now, Alanna, get a pencil, child, and a bit of paper, and we'll send a letter to your Aunt Judy, and let her know we had her letter a time back."

When father came home on the evening of the day after the picnic, he brought with him a wagon-load of lumber. At the Big House, it seems, the gardener had taken down a wooden shed to have a brick one put in its place, and had given the boards to Patrick Malone, and even let him take a horse and wagon to take them home. And while Larry, with much pleasure, was driving the wagon back to the Big House, the rest of the family was staring at the big pile of boards and beams and logs and wondering what they could do with them now they had them.

"I was thinking," said Patrick Malone—Patrick was a very slow thinker and had to help his thoughts along by scratching his head—"I was thinking how Alanna maybe would like a lean-to room of her own."

Alanna's eyes took on that ecstatic look that you might expect to see in them if she were looking at the very mansions of Heaven. And then that look passed away and she looked critically about—at the house, at the present lean-to which, by means of a dividing-wall in the middle, harbored Larry in one end and the cow in the other. Those quick eyes of hers were examining all the possibilities. And not until the examination was completely over did she speak.

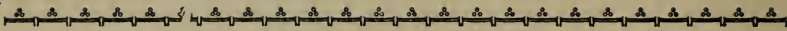
"Me, I know what would be better," she said. "We'll build a new shed for Black Molly, well away from the house, back beyond the pump, and then we won't get the smell of

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the cow into the house. Sure, Molly won't mind being moved off a bit."

"But, Alanna," said her father, astonished, "I thought you'd be as pleased as pleased to have a room of your own!"

"I'll be having a room of my own all right, father," said Alanna. "When Black Molly moves into the new shed, I'll move into her old one." Then with a peal of laughter as though a whole meadowful of bluebells were ringing, she added, "But, bedad, I'll give it a terrible cleaning first!"



Chapter Six

When the others went indoors after the decision to give Black Molly the new shed, Alanna remained outside, sitting on the edge of the pump trough and watching the sun go down in a glory of orange and gold. From the house came her mother's voice, singing little Pat to sleep:

"Little boyeen, boyeen,
Now comes the night,
And the stars. . . .
Husheen! Husheen!

"Stop then your playing,
Your fooling,
Your fretting,
Lest Saint Michael be getting
Angry at you,
Boyeen!

"Little boyeen, boyeen,
Stop your crying!
Be lying
Stillter than still!
Shut your eyes tight!
Husheen! Husheen!"

Alanna listened drowsily, and then started awake, with a new idea. She got up from where she sat, and slipping away

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quietly, went down to the bog. The great brown back of the bog curved gently, and far away beyond it the hills rose in misty purple color. The sky in the west, where the sun had now gone down, faded from orange to a pale yellow, and in the east the stars were slipping up over long bars of dun-colored clouds. Here and there were the cuttings, where the peat had been cut and carried away, and there were bog-holes in the cuttings, some of them half filled with water. Where the bog had not yet been cut, the brown surface was covered with gorse and bog-cotton that rustled now and then when a rabbit ran through them.

Alanna went down to one of the cuttings, and finding a bog-hole with water in it, tried its depth with a stick. Something more than a foot of water was in it, and the bottom seemed firm. Slipping off her clothes, she stepped down into it. It was chilly, and she shivered at first, but splashed happily until she grew warm. When she felt clean as well as warm she climbed out of her tub, ran briskly around it until she was dry, slipped on her clothes again, and ran for home. By this time most of Ballycooly was asleep. For who would be so extravagant as to sit up so late as to need a lamp or candle to undress by? Only at the Kilfoyles' was there any talking as she went by, and she slackened her pace in order to hear what it was about. Peter and Brian were still engaged in the lively business of making objections to being sent to bed.

"It's distracted I am wid all the noise!" she heard Mrs. Kilfoyle's voice saying. "And if you, Miss Pegeen, say another word, 'twill be your last!"

"I'm well on to being a man now," said Peter's voice. "What would anybody be doing sending a man like me to bed?"

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"Me," said Brian, "I could stay up all night and not know the differ."

Behind this conversation a sharp, high-pitched little voice had been keeping up a steady whining, as aggravating as the song of a mosquito. Now the whining condensed into words.

"Thrash 'em both, mother! They're not neither of 'em men at all!"

This, Alanna knew, was Pegeen. Pegeen was known from one end to the other of Ballycooly as "an imp of a little creature." Alanna, walking by in her righteous cleanliness, thought to herself, "Me, I would thrash Pegeen." And then suddenly she heard a terrible thing. Something far worse than a thrashing. She heard Mrs. Kilfoyle's voice, sharp and angry, say, "Be still! You're not a child at all. You're a changeling!"

Alanna's blood ran cold. Changeling! Did Mrs. Kilfoyle really think that the fairies had taken away her own child and left Pegeen in its place? She hurried on, not wanting to hear any more. A changeling! And as everybody knew, when the fairies took away a child, they always took the best, and always left the worst in its place. And Pegeen had always been a very trying child. Often she had heard some one say, "'Tis the matter with her that she's crooked in her temper." But nobody, it seemed, had ever considered ways and means of making that poor little crooked temper straight.

Alanna hurried home with her hands over her ears and the terrible wonder in her mind, could little Pat be a changeling? He was in his cradle, sound asleep. Praise all the saints, Pat couldn't possibly be a changeling! Look at his good-natured little face with its round pink cheeks. Look at the

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peacefully closed eyes. Look at the bit of red-gold hair like a halo about his head. Look at those dimpled hands curled up rose-petal fashion. Pat a changeling? Indeed, no! He's far likelier to be an angel let down from heaven itself! But poor Pegeen, now. Her hair is black (whoever heard of a black halo?), and her face sharp, and her ways queer entirely. Poor Pegeen might be anything.

Next day at one o'clock Alanna sat on her stool at the house door, so dressed up she dared not move. She had washed her Sunday percale the day before, and her mother had let her have an iron in the hot ashes to press it with. It was something of a trial to wear yellow hair ribbons when her dress had little pink flowers over it, but it was a comfort to reflect that she would be so busy admiring Stacey that she would forget all about herself. Besides this, she tossed her braids back over her shoulders where the yellow ribbons would be out of sight as well as out of mind.

Presently the Big House car stopped before the door and Alanna got in. The chauffeur turned the car around to retrace his way, and at once all the very small Ballycoolly children tried to climb onto the steps at the sides. Alanna was furious. Leaning out as far as she could without falling, she told the children what she thought of their bad manners, and what she thought was far from complimentary. The chauffeur quickening his pace with a jerk, some of the hangers-on fell off, others slid off lest blows should follow Alanna's words. Alanna had a good strong pair of fists, as they all knew, and she might come leapin' down from the car that instant minute and use them. Thady and Rose, left far behind, told Alanna in two great roars what *they* thought of *her* and that wasn't

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complimentary either. Katie, Tom, and Anna were still rolling in the dust, and the small Lally boys were fighting the small Riley boys to relieve their hurt feelings.

Alanna clasped her hands together and tried to calm down. Just suppose Stacey had come in the car to call for her! Alanna's face grew hot at the thought. It was a quare world entirely, she thought, where everybody wouldn't be as nice as they knew how to be. But at this thought, searching her own past behavior, she remembered certain occasions when she herself hadn't been as nice as she knew how to be. So perhaps it isn't queer but just plain human, after all.

At length the car reached the Big House, and there stood Stacey on the drive before the great door, waiting for her. Alanna jumped out quickly and the car drove off. But it had gone but a few yards along the driveway when something tumbled from it—something that fell flat, picked itself up, smoothed itself down, and smiled pleasantly. It was that little imp of a Pegeen Kilfoyle! Alanna's eyes filled with mortified tears.

"Why, Alanna, who is that?" asked Stacey.

"It's that little Pegeen Kilfoyle, and why she wants to go traipsing around after me I couldn't tell you," said Alanna. Pegeen, approaching slowly, put a finger in her mouth and looked anxiously at Stacey. It had not occurred to her that she wouldn't be wanted.

"Look at the sight you are and take shame to yourself, Pegeen Kilfoyle!" said Alanna, wondering, in her distress, how she could get rid of the little imp.

Pegeen looked at herself. Her dress was torn and dirty. Her face, hands, and little brown, bare legs were dirty. Her hair

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was in tangled disorder. But take shame to herself? Not she! Her big eyes sparkled and she smiled again. Four of her upper front teeth were gone, which gave her a rather unfinished look.

"Go home with yourself!" said Alanna sharply, stamping her foot. "You know you're nothing but a changeling!"

The moment Alanna spoke these cruel words her warm heart repented of them. It is always so. And what a shame it is that we can't repent before we say the unpleasant thing. All the repenting in the world won't unsay the words. They have made their ripple on the air and are said forever. Instantly Alanna ran to Pegeen, stooped down, and tried to put her arms about her. But Pegeen, with woebegone face, wriggled away and was off like the wind, trailing a burst of weeping as she went.

Alanna could have wailed herself, for her lovely afternoon was spoiled, she knew. But Stacey, seizing her arm, pulled her along, saying, "Come along! We must catch her! She might get hurt somewhere!" Down the driveway they went, around the garden, back of the stable, through the orchard, Alanna marveling at Stacey's splendid speed, and keeping up only with difficulty. But as swift as the hounds might be, always the little hare gave them the slip, now doubling on her track, now tumbling, now up and on again!

"If I'm really a changeling," went little Pegeen's thoughts, "maybe the fairies will hide me." And with that she tripped over the great root of a tree and went head-first down into a hole among the roots, knocking her senses into that "middle of next week" into which so many things are knocked. When Stacey and Alanna found her she had come to again, and was

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trying to get out of the hole. Stacey pulled one foot, Alanna the other, and presently had her out of the hole. There was a big bruise on her forehead, and she looked dazed at first. She was fixin' to cry, but changed her mind as an idea came into her head. Her face took on that look that the Scotch people call canny, but that we would call uncanny.

"You don't know where I've been," she said, with a knowing smile.

"Well, where have you been?" asked Stacey.

"I've been to see the Little People. They live down in that hole where I went. I went down very deep, till I came to their house."

Stacey and Alanna waited for more and presently it came.

"And I saw the queen of the Little People, with her goldeny crown on, and she let me sit beside her. And she said to me, 'Pegeen Kilfoyle, who are you? I don't know you; I never saw you before. You don't belong to us.'" Here Pegeen put her hand on the bruise on her forehead, which was turning purple, her lip quivered, and she began to weep.

"Alanna," said Stacey, "you hold her tight while I run get Johnny Kinsella to carry her up to the house. Then we'll get Rosey to give her a bath."

Johnny Kinsella proved to be the chauffeur, and he picked Pegeen up rather gingerly and carried her to the house, where Rosey, the pretty young housemaid, received her very gingerly and took her to the bathtub. Aunt Anastasia, however, held her with a firm grip while Rosie got the warm bath ready, and then went to the attic and got from a trunk up there some clothes that had been Stacey's when she, like Pegeen, was somewhere about seven.

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Stacey, meanwhile, took Alanna away to her own room. Here Alanna looked at and admired everything, making a complete circuit of the room, not missing so much as one book or picture. At last they sat down, and Stacey told her of the school at Dublin to which she went each winter. It was hard for Alanna to understand all these things. How, indeed, could she? The school in town to which Alanna went had but one room and one teacher, but Stacey talked of a Latin Room, and a Music Room, and a Study Room, and named a string of teachers, from Mademoiselle Manette, who was but newly come from Paris, to Mrs. Hewlett, the pompous "Head." Stacey also told amusing tales of her schoolmates. It seemed that her favorite schoolmate was a certain Rose. Rose, it seemed, was quite too wonderful for anything. Rose had such perfect taste. Rose could speak French as well as Mademoiselle herself. Thinks Alanna, praise be, Stacey has a friend that's nice like herself, and decided she would add Rose's name to Stacey's in her prayers.

Shrieks from the bathroom reminded them once more of Pegeen.

"Alanna," asked Stacey in a mysterious whisper, "have you looked at Pegeen's ears?"

"Her ears?"

"Sh-h-h! Yes, her ears. If they're pointed, she really is a changeling."

Alanna was speechless.

"When you get a chance you'd better look and see," said Stacey, half laughing, half in earnest.

"Sure, I wouldn't dare!" said Alanna.

"Why not?"

"They might be pointed." Alanna shuddered as she spoke. But in her heart she privately decided to look and see did little Pat's be pointed.

After a while Rosie, in her neat black dress and white ruffled apron, and looking a little ruffled herself, came to announce that tea was ready in the garden, and the two girls went down at once. In her seat at the tea-table sat Aunt Anastasia with a beautiful child upon her lap—a child dressed in simple, pretty summer clothes, and with the neatest of little shoes and stockings on. The lovely child had dark, smooth curls, eyes as blue as the sea, and a face as grave as the stony face of the Egyptian sphinx. As the girls approached the child lifted her grave, angelic face to Aunt Anastasia and asked a question.

"Do I be wearing these things home, ma'am?"

"You do," said Aunt Anastasia.

"Do I be keeping them?"

"You do, indeed."

"And nobody will be trying to take them away from me?"

"No, Pegeen, they are yours; nobody will take them away from you."

Pegeen, her grave face becoming soft and serene, looked about her. She saw the footman coming with the tea-things; saw Aunt Anastasia's smiling face looking down at her; saw the shoes and stockings on her own feet. She smoothed down the gay little dress. She felt on the top of her head for something that wasn't there.

"Did there be a halo on my head I would know I was in Heaven," she said, and sighed with deep contentment. With all these good and lovely things about her she really didn't mind not having a halo.

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And now it was Pegeen who ate and ate and ate, and it was Alanna, who had once done the same, who now frowned at Pegeen. Frowned so sternly, indeed, that Pegeen unwillingly drew back her hand from the sixth scone that she so much desired to send after the five she had so happily consumed. When the footman took away what little was left upon the big silver tray, Aunt Anastasia read from a big book stories of heroes and heroines of ancient days—of Cuchulain, of Fingal and Ossian, of Grania and Deirdre. Alanna listened for a while, but other things kept crowding into her mind. Pegeen, sitting on a garden bench opposite to her, was swinging her little stockinged legs and neatly shod feet to and fro, to and fro. Thinks Alanna, “if only I could I would put shoes and stockings on all the Ballycooly childer—on Thady and Rose Tracy, on little Barney and Terence Lally, on Katie and Tom and Anna McCann, on Brian and Peter Kilfoyle, and on my own brother Larry. Then they could all swing their legs and look as fine as fine!” And while she was thinking of this, here comes Johnny Kinsella to say that the car is waiting for the Ballycooly ladies.

Johnny Kinsella set Pegeen down at her door with a flourish. “There you are, Miss Kilfoyle!” he said.

Pegeen walked slowly to the house door, while all of Ballycooly stared and stared. Pegeen with shoes and stockings! Pegeen with beautifully curled hair! Pegeen with a clean pink gingham dress and a ruffly white petticoat below it, and ruffly white panties below that! And more than all, Pegeen looking as good-natured as an angel itself, with her impish smile turned to one entirely sweet!

“I saw the queen of the fairies, mother!” she said in a voice

loud enough to be heard from one end of Ballycooly to the other. "And she says, says she, 'Miss Kilfoyle, I don't know you at all, at all! Go home to your mother!' So here I am."

And Mrs. Kilfoyle, snatching Pegeen up in her arms and kissing the bruise on her forehead, thinks to herself, "I'll just be putting on my bonnet tomorrow and be making a few calls. I'll step in at the door of Mrs. McQuirk and Mrs. Malone and Mrs. Tracey and Mrs. Lally and Mrs. McCann and Mrs. Riley and give them a word or two about how my little Pegeen (the darlin'!) went up to the Big House, and came a-riding home in a car, with Johnny Kinsella letting her out as fine as fine at her own door, and she dressed like a Christmas doll in a shop window!"

Alanna, set down at her own door, walked slowly up the short path to the house. Her heart felt very heavy over having called Pegeen a changeling. What would Father Ryan think if he knew she had spoken such an unkind word? Somehow she felt herself responsible for Pegeen. But just how could she be responsible? Finally she had an idea.

Next morning she presented herself promptly at the Kilfoyle door. Pegeen, in her old clothes, sat flat upon the earthen floor. Her face was dotted with bits of the stirabout she was eating, and her hair was a mass of tangles. Two hens were also eating out of Pegeen's dish, and were getting as much with their little yellow beaks as Pegeen was getting with her spoon.

"Mrs. Kilfoyle, ma'am, where are Pegeen's new clothes?" asked Alanna.

"Put away for Sunday," said Mrs. Kilfoyle.

"They ought to be kept clean."

"They will be."

"Pegeen ought to be kept clean too—" Alanna began, but Mrs. Kilfoyle, with arms akimbo, burst into hearty laughter.

"Take her," she said, "and see can you keep her clean yourself. Sure it's a life job to anyone that takes it. You're welcome to make the trial, Alanna my dear, and may the saints help you!"

So here was Alanna with a job thrown upon her, and before two days had gone by she discovered that she might as




PEGEEN IN HER OLD CLOTHES

well have bargained to keep the pig in the sty himself spotless.

"It's the foolish person I was to be taking the job," said Alanna to her mother.

"That's a true word you've spoken," said her mother. "You'd best be putting your work on little Pat, and him soon ready to be crawling about in the dirt. Sure, Alanna darlin', nobody can be keeping the entire world clean. It's better to stop off on yourself, I'm thinking. There's a spot on your own nose this instant minute, and a grass-stain on your apron."



Chapter Seven

It took Patrick Malone nearly two weeks to put up the new cow shed, for he had only odd times to work at it, and when it was done the whole of Ballycooly led Black Molly into it. They fully expected she would show some appreciation of her new quarters. Not she! Not so much as a swing of her tail did she give as she walked in and looked around. She could turn around in the new shed, too, the ungrateful creature, which she hadn't been able to do in her old quarters, but must needs back herself out. After the excitement was over, the Ballycooly folk returned to their homes—all but Tim Riley. He looked at Black Molly's old shed, sniffed its heavy odor and spoke his mind.

"It's a quare way to do," he said to Alanna, "to put a four-legged beast into a clean, new house, and to give her old leavings to a human. I don't see how you stand for it, Alanna."

"I chose it that way myself, Tim," said Alanna. "Our house will smell cleaner now that the cow shed is farther off. And you'll see what you'll see when I get the old shed cleaned out. A fine room it will make."

"Are you going to clean it out yourself, Alanna?" asked Tim, his face showing utter disapproval.

"You watch me!" said Alanna, with a laugh. "I'm as good

at cleaning as anybody in Ballycooly. Tomorrow as soon as school's out I'll be leppin' home as fast as I can to begin it."

Tim said no more but went thoughtfully home. Next morning Larry said at breakfast that he thought Black Molly must have come back to her old place. "Sure I heard her moving about and breathing in there. But she was in the new shed with the door shut last night. I dunno how it can be."

"You were dreaming," said his mother.

"It was a pretty loud dream then," said Larry.

Alanna jumped up from the table and ran around to look. She wasn't pleased with the thought that Black Molly might keep on coming back to the old shed after she herself had moved into it. Think of waking up at night to find Black Molly licking your cheek with her rasping tongue or poking her horns into your ribs! She ran around and looked into the old shed. It was as clean as a shovel and a broom could make it—though that is a long way from saying that it was as clean as it could be made.

"The fairies is in it!" cried Alanna, with eyes big with astonishment.

At school that day she paid very poor attention to her lessons—a most unusual thing. Miss McGrennigan had to reprimand her twice. She missed two words in spelling, couldn't "bound" Spain, didn't get all her arithmetic problems right, and couldn't parse the "Satan exalted sat" sentence—which you will confess is a very tricky one to parse. I'm not sure that Miss McGrennigan herself knew whether the adjective "barbaric" was meant to modify "kings" or "gold." But all the time Alanna was thinking of the old cow shed, and hoped

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her mother wouldn't forget to have ready, as she had promised, a big kettle of hot water.

Well, sure enough the water was hot and ready when she got home, and then Alanna with an old broom that had seen better days, and was about to see worse, cleaned the old cow shed until even her mother was astonished at what Alanna had been able to do. That night both the door and the tiny window with its wooden shutter were left wide open so that the fresh air might do its work. Then in the morning, Alanna, going out to see if there was any smell of Black Molly left in the place, was again struck dumb with astonishment. The dumbness didn't last long, however, for Alanna gave a great shout. Again the family ran to see what had happened. All the inside of the shed had been whitewashed!

"The Little People is surely in it!" shouted Alanna, and wondered whether it would be proper to pray to the fairies and thank them for this kindly deed.

That day at school Miss McGrennigan, who of course had heard all about these wonders, and of the little room that Alanna was going to keep as clean as clean, gave Alanna a gift. It was a good-sized wall map of the "States of America," which had been replaced recently by a bigger and better one.

"You can hang that upon the wall of your new room, Alanna," said Miss McGrennigan.

"Is Baltimore in it?" asked Alanna.

Miss McGrennigan found Baltimore for Alanna, and Alanna stuck a pin into it for fear she would not be able to find it when she got home.

There was only one objection to Alanna's new room (we

will never again, of course, think or speak of it as the old cow shed), and that was that she could not get from it directly into the house. It was Larry's half of the lean-to that had been built against the back door of the house. Alanna must go all around to the front door to get in. But that worried her very little. She was more concerned lest Black Molly should perish from the cold away off there ten yards or more from the house.

Alanna insisted on keeping the wooden manger into which Black Molly had been accustomed to dip her nose and eat, for it served very well for a bureau drawer, where her Sunday dress, her yellow ribbons, and a few odds and ends (such as her school compositions) might be kept. Larry helped her move the trundle bed in, and then, as she said, she was "fixed for life." With the map of the States of America on one wall, and a bit of a white rag by way of a curtain, sure a queen herself would be comfortable there!

Time, that restless creature that sometimes lags, sometimes hurries along, but never stands comfortably still, now seemed to be speeding up. The summer, which had been at its lovely height, began to wane. The six stalks of foxglove on the Malone housetop became at last only dry ghosts of their former beauty, and Alanna with mournful eyes watched them dry and drop their leaves. Never again might that exquisite miracle happen, or, if it did, might be on some other roof in Bally-cooly, which wouldn't, of course, seem quite so wonderful. In the garden Larry pulled up the dry bean-plants and planted turnips in their place. And before you knew it tomatoes were rounding and ripening, and there were carrots and onions for the soup-pot, and beets to tie into bunches and sell in the market square in town.

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So, little by little, the summer passed into autumn, and the autumn into winter with its frosts and snow, and with its perishing cold that was felt by old and young alike.

At Christmas time Stacey came home from the school in Dublin that she attended, and while she was home the Big House was a blaze of lights when evening came. For Stacey brought home with her some of her schoolgirl friends, and there were parties and sleighrides and gay doings of all kinds. Alanna looked up often to those lights through her little window, and her heart warmed towards "clean and pretty Stacey." She could not picture what Stacey and her friends would be doing all those evenings, but she knew it must be something delightful. And she felt sure they would all be clean and beautiful to look at. This word "clean" was now an important one in Alanna's vocabulary, and was an adjective of highest praise. After she had said of anything that it was clean, then she enumerated its lesser qualities and called it fine, or beautiful.

One day Stacey and Aunt Anastasia, passing along the road through Ballycooly in their car, stopped a moment to ask after Alanna. Alanna begged them to come and see her little room, which they did. Stacey gave the room generous praise, and turned away and choked back some quick warm tears. Perhaps "choked" is not the word. Perhaps you "pull" them back with your heartstrings.

"Today is my birthday," said Alanna, "and my mother is going to make me a new curtain. Look, Stacey, I can see the lights of your house from my window. I often look at them."

"How old are you today, Alanna?" asked Aunt Anastasia.

"Thirteen," said Alanna. "And here is my map that has

Baltimore on it, where my Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy live. It isn't every girl has a map in her room. And maybe there do not be many girls that have a room all their own. Praise be, I have!"

Stacey's quick mind saw in a flash the vast difference between this poor room and that luxurious room of her own at the Big House. There was all the difference in the world between them. But in Alanna's face Stacey saw only happiness and pride. Stacey kissed Alanna and hurried to the car.

That evening, when the Malones were sitting about the fire, with an extra sod of peat thrown on in honor of Alanna's birthday, there was a sharp rap at the door, and there stood Johnny Kinsella with a big tufted quilt over one arm and a chair in his hand.

"Miss Stacey sends her compliments to Miss Malone," he said gravely, though there was a smile at the back of his eyes, "and these are from Miss Stacey's own room, and are a birthday present, for Miss Malone's new room." Here Johnny couldn't restrain himself, but grinned cheerfully. He balanced the chair upon the uneven earthen floor, and Alanna sank down upon it and took the big crimson quilt into her arms. She couldn't think of a thing to say, but sat speechless. However, Johnny said, "Yes, Miss," as though she had spoken, and withdrew. All the rest of the evening, while the tongues of the rest of the family buzzed, Alanna sat mute. Only now and then she rubbed her cheek against the quilt and whispered to herself "clean and wonderful!"

Alanna went to school all winter, knowing that in the spring her schooling would be over. For she was getting tall and strong now, though still a bit thin, and must begin to earn

money to help out. Larry was very anxious to be old enough and strong enough to cut turf, but as yet he was too small for that job. Patrick Malone in the early spring hired himself out to a farmer on the other side of town, and was busy ploughing and planting for a while. Later he did whitewashing in the town, and so occupied himself until he was wanted again up at the Big House. Larry was now eleven and could work faithfully at a job, and when the summer was ripe and the flax ready for the pulling, he and Alanna walked six miles every morning to work in the flax fields on the western side of Hillside. Alanna's hands became cracked and swollen, and on the night after her first day in the flax fields she cried a bit, lying there in her little room, looking out the tiny window at the dark patch of sky sprinkled with a handful of stars. Suppose Stacey should invite her some afternoon to have tea in the garden and hear Aunt Anastasia read? Could she go with such hands? Stacey's hands were not only clean, but white, shapely, and altogether beautiful. Praise be, Stacey did not have to pull flax!

After the flax pulling was over Alanna went to see Miss McGrennigan and ask her if she could find a job for her. And Miss McGrennigan, being a kind young creature, bestirred herself to find a job for Alanna, and succeeded. Mrs. Grainey, who kept a little shop in town, was laid up with the lumbago, and Alanna took her place behind the counter in the store for two weeks. Mrs. Grainey was not of a trustful nature, and she had her bed moved so that she could look through her bedroom door into the shop and watch Alanna with a sharp eye. Not only so, but she shouted orders to her, and kept "the pint," that is, the tin cup she kept her money in, clasped tight

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in her knotted hands, and each time Alanna made a sale she must come and count out the farthings and ha'pennies into it.

But what a thrilling two weeks for Alanna! What a delight to have the people of the town come in, this one for a spool of thread; that one for a "wisp" of tea (by which is meant a poor penny's worth in a twist of paper, not being enough to warrant being put into a paper bag); an ancient old man for a bit of tobacco for his pipe; a child for a lollipop. And once—wasn't this too wonderful for words?—didn't her own mother come steppin' in, in her best bonnet and all, and with little Pat (who could now stand on his own legs and navigate crookedly about), to buy some red "flannen" to make little Pat a new shirt! Och, wasn't it fun for Alanna to pretend she didn't know her mother! "Is it a yard you want, ma'am? Hadn't you better take a quarter more, ma'am, lest it shrink on you?" And when the flannen turned out to be a little cheaper than Mrs. Malone had expected, didn't she up and buy a farthing lemon-drop for Pat? Sure she did, and it bulged out Pat's little cheek like the mumps, and he as grave as the sphinx for fear a smile would let it go popping out.

Well, two weeks are only two weeks, and there was Alanna out of a job again. This time she used her own eyes to find one. On the edge of town there was a row of cottages badly in need of whitewashing. This gave Alanna an idea. The next morning, dressed in her father's overalls, her hair tucked up out of sight under an old felt hat, with whitewash bucket and brush in hand, she went and asked for a job at the first cottage in the row. No, a young man was coming that very morning to do it. But at the next house she had better luck. "Himself's away at the farm," said the woman, "and was telling me

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before he went to take any likely lad that came along to do it."

"I'm the likely lad," said Alanna.

"You don't look any too strong," said the woman.

"Look at my muscles," said Alanna, and showed the muscles on her arms that the flax pulling had hardened.

"Well, you try the back," said the woman, "and if you don't do that well nary a bit o' the front do you do."

Alanna sped off with her bucket to buy the whitewash, and was back in a jiffy. She had helped her father in the spring when he whitewashed their own house and was not, therefore, an entirely green hand. Before long she heard a lively whistling. No doubt the young man was at work on the next house. Alanna must work as fast as he or the woman might not let her do the front. She soon found that to work steadily gave better results than to work fast. The sun was hot. Sweat poured down her face. Her arms began to ache. She splashed herself with whitewash. Whitewashing began to look like a man-size job.

Presently the cheery whistling began to grow louder, and the young man doing the next house came around to the back. Young man, indeed! It wasn't anybody but Tim Riley!

"Is it yourself, Tim?" called Alanna.

"Who else would it be?" answered Tim, and came over to speak to Alanna.

"Is it yourself, Alanna?"

"It's nobody else in the world," said Alanna.

"That's too hard work for you, Alanna, and you no bigger than you are."

"Bedad, no!" laughed Alanna, and slapped on another

brushful. Then she looked sharply at Tim and a recollection came swimming up from some low cave in her memory, to the place where her consciousness sat. "Now I know!" she said. "It wasn't fairies was in it at all. It was you, Tim Riley, that cleaned the old cow shed and whitewashed it!"

"Shucks!" said Tim, and went back to his job.

At noon they sat on the stony bank behind the houses and ate their lunch, Alanna sharing her bit of griddlecake with Tim, and Tim giving her the bigger half (unbeknownst to her) of his bread-and-cheese sandwich. One of the women, enjoying the sound of their gay young laughter that floated in to her, fetched them a pot of cold tea.

"What's your next job, Alanna?" asked Tim.

Alanna stood up and looked all around the countryside for an inspiration. Stony ledges, dusty roads, ripe fields, clusters of thatched roofs, none of these gave her any idea. Suddenly, however, she saw something. Her face lighted up and she threw a merry peal of laughter on the wind.

"Just the thing!" she cried. "Look, Tim! I shall stand like this" (here she spread her arms out and stood on one foot) "in the middle of a bean field or a cherry orchard and save the crops, poor things, from the birds, poor creatures! Wouldn't I make a gob of a scarecrow?"

Late that afternoon Tim and Alanna trudged home together to Ballycooly, and now Alanna's hands were not only scratched and swollen, but blistered as well. But no matter. Had she not four shillings and a six-pence rattling together in her pocket? Entering the house by stepping over little Pat, who was doing quaint gymnastics in the doorway, she threw the shillings into her mother's lap.

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"There's the riches of the world for you, mother jewel!" she cried, and added, holding up the sixpence, "but this I'll save for you know what." She went around the house, entered her room, and took a matchbox from the manger. In it there was a little store of small coins, and to these she added the silver sixpence, which looked quite lordly amidst its copper companions. She was saving up to buy a gift for Stacey.


She did not see much of Stacey that summer, since Aunt Anastasia took her for a visit to London. The autumn came on quickly, and in November the frosts began. When Alanna's fourteenth birthday came, a few days after Christmas, she had not seen the Big House lighted up, for Stacey had spent the Christmas holidays with that wonderful friend of hers, Rose. It made Alanna feel lonely to look up at the Big House standing so dark upon Hillside, and so she would look no more.

In January she had the job of looking after Doctor Garrigue's two little children while their mother was at the hospital at Limerick, and this was a great delight. When she had washed and dressed the little ones they looked so clean and beautiful, though their clothes were of the simplest, that she took part of her first week's pay and bought herself a new white apron, washing it every night and ironing it every morning. The children were quick and lively, and the days went by happily, until their mother came home again, pale but cured of her ailment.

After that the days grew bitter cold, with a black frost, and the wind came keening around Hillside from the north, bringing gusts of blinding, stinging snow. In mid-January a deep snow covered Ballycooly, drifting sometimes up over a window

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to the very eaves. All the pumps of Ballycooly froze and had to be thawed out with kettlefuls of snow heated over the fire; the potatoes froze; the children had blue noses; the old folks (saints help them!) were perishing from the cold. And at that inauspicious time Patrick Malone fell ill.



Chapter Eight

Patrick Malone was a grave, silent, kindly man who was faithful in his work, loved his wife and children, but had few words with which to express himself. And one bitter day when the bogs were ice-covered and the roads as hard as iron, he came home, went to bed, turned his face to the wall and lay still.

"Whatever is it, Patrick my dear?" asked his wife.

"I haven't been well this great while back," said he, and that was all.

"Run you now, Alanna," said Mrs. Malone, "and borry the loan of a bit of mustard from anybody that does be having some."

Alanna ran from house to house, and at the Lally house old Granny Lally, sitting doubled up over a wee bit of a fire, rose up and looked on the shelf, and at last found a mustard can that was half full. Her poor old hands, cold and blue, shook as she handed it to Alanna.

"Why don't you go to bed, Granny?" asked Alanna. "Then you could contrive to keep warm under the covers."

"Sure the two little ones was perishin'," said Granny, "and I gave the bed to them."

Sure enough, there in Granny's bed were the two youngest Lallys, Barney and Terence, snuggled down under Granny's

own quilt, and their own poor quilt on the top of that. All you could see of them was their big owl eyes above the quilts. Alanna thanked Granny for the mustard and hurried home, where her mother at once busied herself making a big mustard plaster. When it was ready, and hot in two senses, she carried it on the outstretched palms of her hands to the bedside.

"Where does it be hurting you the most, Patrick?" she asked.

"In my chest," said Patrick.

Mrs. Malone spread the plaster on her husband's chest, and drew the covers over him, tucking them in well about his neck.

"There now," she said comfortingly, "if it burns, just be patient. Praise be, it'll make you forget your other pain a while."

Meanwhile Alanna left the house and went around to her room. Entering it, she looked long at the beautiful crimson quilt upon the bed. The little low trundle-bed was higher now, as her father had put long legs upon it—which alone made Alanna feel quite grown up. At last she gathered up the quilt and ran back to the Lally house.

"Granny," she said, when she had turned the little boys out of Granny's bed into their own, and tucked Granny into her own bed under the crimson quilt, "I'm not *giving* you this, you understand! I'm just lending you the loan of it while the weather is so freezing cold. Do you understand, Granny?"

Granny nodded and took a firm hold upon the corner of the quilt, and Alanna sped home again. Two days went by and Patrick Malone got no better. His breath came wheezing up out of his poor chest, his face had a pinched and anxious

look, and at times he groaned. The cold dark twilight of another day came on with leaden clouds, and it began to snow afresh. Mrs. Malone bade Larry bring in plenty of sods of peat from the pile beside the door and set them by the fire-place, and then sent both Larry and Alanna to bed. Alanna could not sleep for a long time, feeling the loss of her warm quilt. At last, however, she fell into a deep sleep. Suddenly she was aroused by her mother's voice calling her. She leaped up, put on her clothes hurriedly, and went quickly to her mother. Her mother was putting another sod of peat upon the fire, her father was groaning with every breath, and little Pat was sitting bolt upright in his crib, fixin' to cry.

"Your father's had a bad turn," said her mother. "I hate to send you out this cold night, Alanna, but you must get the doctor and Father Ryan. Best take Larry with you; the two of ye can get along better than one. Hurry now! And before you go, fetch me your warm quilt to put over your father."

Alanna went out, closed the door behind her, and stood in the cold air, stunned. How could she take her mother the quilt? She couldn't! And her father needing it! Bursting into tears, she went around to her room, put on her coat, tied a shawl about her head, and went out into the night and the storm. The snow was swirling about her thickly, and just as thickly the thoughts went swirling through her head. It had seemed the right thing to lend her quilt to Granny Lally, but she saw now that she should have asked her mother first.

Alanna bent her head before the fury of wind and snow and made what speed she could, and not until she reached the boggy place in the road did she remember that her mother had

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advised her to take Larry. Larry was good at finding his way in the dark, and already Alanna was not sure whether she would be on the road when she had crossed the boggy place. Alanna's heart sank down into her very shoes. Should she go back? It would take precious time, and she did remember that her mother had told her to hurry. She struggled on. Yes, she was still on the road, for here was the great boulder on the left. Indeed, she found it by knocking her shoulder upon the sharp edge that jutted out into the road. After that she kept close to the low stone fence that enclosed the meadows on the left. Her hands were freezing, she felt sure, but she could not put them into her coat pockets, for then the snowy fingers of the wind would strip the shawl from her head, and without that she would be lost, indeed. On and on, head down, in the cold and the dark she went, pausing now and then to turn her back to the wind lest her cheeks be cut with it as by a knife. And at last, weary and with sobbing breath, she gained the doctor's house.

Doctor Garrigue drew Alanna into the house and called to his wife to come and give her some hot milk while he got out his shabby old car and packed his shabby old bag. That shabby old car and bag had been called out on many a night and gone on such splendid errands of mercy that the people of Kilkenny County never noticed the shabbiness of them. Even crusty old Mrs. Grainey, in whose shop Alanna had worked for two weeks, said "God bless him!" when she saw the doctor's car going by. Alanna, sitting on the sofa in the doctor's office with a shawl wrapped about her feet and sipping a glass of hot milk, told Mrs. Garrigue with a burst of tears about the quilt, and Mrs. Garrigue patted her shoulder and

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told her not to think of that any more. The clock struck one as the doctor called to Alanna that he was ready and she went out and got into his car. Soon they had picked up Father Ryan and were on their way to Ballycooly. Here all was dark, save the one light in the Malone house. When the three left the car and walked up to the house they heard that sorrowful sound that Ireland knows so well—that long wailing cry of sorrow and grief that they call “keening.” Quickly they pushed open the door and entered. Mrs. Malone, with little Pat in her arms, sat before the fire, which, since she had forgotten to replenish it, was dying down. She lifted her face when the doctor laid a hand upon her shoulder.

“You are too late,” she said, “Himself is dead.”

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Ballycooly is as warm-hearted a place as any you will find in all of warm-hearted Ireland. When the pitiful little procession of the Malones came home from the cemetery where they had buried Patrick Malone, Mrs. Malone leaning upon the arm of Mrs. McQuirk, they did not find the house cold and empty. No, they found Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Kilfoyle cooking a good dinner over a bright fire; they found Tim Riley carrying in a great creel of potatoes from the Rileys’ garden; they found Mrs. McCann milking Black Molly and filling the Malone milk jug twice as full as usual; they found Mr. Kilfoyle fetching a load of peat; they found Mrs. Lally bringing home Alanna’s crimson quilt, in spite of the tears of old Granny who didn’t want to let it go. And there was Granddaddy Tracy, who had been all the way to town for a tuppence o’ peppermint lozenges for the Malone childer.

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The Kilfoyle twins, Brian and Peter, had cleared a path in the snow from road to gate, around the house, and out to the cow shed, and, by way of good measure, had built a lordly snowman by the front door. Even down to little Tom and Rose and Thady and Anna, everyone showed sympathy. For the four just mentioned nobly refrained from hinting for any of the peppermint lozenges that Granddaddy Tracey had brought back from town, and who could do more than that?

When, worn out with grief and weariness, Alanna and Larry at last fell asleep, Mrs. Malone still sat before the dying fire, wondering what would become of herself and her children. Not until she must would she send a child to Sister Judy away off in America. And when she did it would have to be Alanna, since she would need Larry's boy's strength to help her with the garden and carrying the stuff to town to sell. Alanna for a time could get a job in town. And there's the pig. Sure they ought to get a good price for him, and he a big fat grunter. Then for very little they could buy a little squealer, and raise and fatten him for the fall market. And maybe she herself could raise more chickens and send them to the Kilkenny market. Anyway, praise be, they had a roof over their heads with the rent paid up until Mayday. Bedad, she'd not promise Sister Judy anything in a hurry! And so she sat, thinking of the childer, and of Patrick that had been such a good husband and kind father, until the first streaks of dawn in the sky found her shivering there before the dead ashes on the hearth.

With the morning and the rising sun came courage. It always does. A great and splendid thing the new day is, with enough light to see through things that one cannot see through

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by night. By the time they had had some hot stirabout made of good yellow cornmeal, and a sup of hot tea with milk in it, sure there was courage a-plenty in four hearts. Pat's courage took the shape of moving all the stools about and getting in everybody's way. All the stools but one, I should say, for Patrick Malone's, which was bigger than the others, would henceforth stand in his favorite corner of the fireplace, where he had always sat and smoked his pipe after supper.

Mrs. Malone's courage was the courage of any mother who is left alone to find food and comfort for her children. At once she sent Larry and Alanna to town, Larry with his shovel to get a job of shoveling snow, Alanna to find what work she could. And so Larry put his sweater under his jacket and Alanna put on her coat and the shawl about her head, and away they went, enjoying the tingling cold upon their cheeks and the golden light of the sun which adorned the day.

"I'm the man of the family now," said Larry, and threw a snowball at Alanna.

"Behave like one, then!" said Alanna, pelting Larry with handfuls of snow.

Larry had no trouble finding a job of cleaning off snow. The snow had fallen most of the night, as well as the day before, and there were plenty of shops on the street that climbed the hill from the Common that needed to have their sidewalks cleaned. But Alanna had more difficulty. Nobody seemed to want any help. At last, as she came to the school, she could not resist going in. Perhaps Miss McGrennigan would let her stay a bit and get warm. She went into the vestibule, opened the door of the schoolroom, and looked about with interest, and with longing in her heart to be a pupil there once more.

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What care-free days those had been when she sat there at her desk . . . and will you look! There's that big omadhaun of a Mike O'Grady sitting at her desk and cutting it with a knife!

"Mike O'Grady, stop that cutting this very instant minute!" she cried out, not stopping to think. (We never do!)

There was a laugh from the roomful of children, and Miss McGrennigan looked around at Alanna.

"Please, Miss McGrennigan, would you be telling Mike O'Grady not to be cutting the desk with his knife? That's *my* desk!"

"Alanna!" said Miss McGrennigan, with a sneeze, "you are just the person I want."

"Who, me?"

"Yes, you." Here Miss McGrennigan gave another sneeze. "I'm coming down ill with a terrible cold. I think you could run the school for me for a few days, couldn't you, Alanna?"

Could she! Alanna's beaming face was answer enough.

"I'll pay you for it, you know, Alanna. I tried to get some one yesterday but couldn't. I'm sure you can keep order ——"

"Sure I can!" interrupted Alanna cheerfully. "You just cut and run for home, Miss McGrennigan dear."

Alanna went to the desk as Miss McGrennigan went to the cloakroom for her hat and coat, and pored over the schedule for a minute or two. Then she looked at the clock on the wall. Miss McGrennigan, with her coat and hat on, waited a moment to see how Alanna took hold.

"Girls and boys," said Alanna, "I'm in Miss McGrennigan's place, and I'm to be minded just the way she is minded. Katie Finn, sit up straight whether you have a backbone or not! Miss McGrennigan has a great deal more learning than I have,

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but her two fists are no better than mine for keeping order. You little fella on the back seat with molasses on your face! Go out and wash up, hands and all, and don't ever come to school dirty again! You Kilfoyle twins, stop whispering! And next time you try it remember how I knocked you both into the ditch one day, will ye! Now the third class in spelling come up when I tap the bell. And the geography class that comes next had best be studying right now, to be ready. It's very important to be knowing the names of all the places in the world, as you may be going to any one of them any day. Yessir, any day!"

Alanna tapped the bell briskly, the third class in spelling came to the front, and Miss McGrennigan, with a final sneeze, went home and went to bed with an aching head and an easy conscience.

Alanna ran the school for ten days while Miss McGrennigan enjoyed an attack of the "flu." Alanna felt exalted. Teaching seemed to her to be the greatest work in the world. After the first day you may be sure she wore her Sunday dress every day, and she twisted her long braids about her head and fastened them with some of her mother's hairpins. It made her feel several inches taller and several years older. She was quite heartbroken when Miss McGrennigan was well again and was to return on the coming Monday. On the Friday before, when the children had all gone home and she was alone in the empty room, she went to the desk where she had sat for seven years as a pupil and kissed it. After that she went to the desk behind which she had stood as a teacher for ten days, and kissed that even more fervently.

Well, these brief jobs helped a little, but they were not

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enough to depend upon. Alanna was growing tall, and needed new clothes, and Larry, according to his mother, was "eating his head off." Little Pat was coming along and would need trousers before you could turn around. But there was the pig. Mrs. Malone hoped to get a tidy sum for him.

In one way and another they managed to get along. In February Larry helped a farmer with his ploughing and wheat-



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sowing, and in March prepared the ground in his mother's garden patch and put in the potatoes with her. Then late in March there was a cattle market in the town. I really think that Mrs. Malone and Alanna and Larry stinted themselves in their food through all of March in order to stuff the pig. He was a big white fellow, with very wicked looking little eyes, and a snout that would frighten anybody. Mrs. Malone,

looking into the pigsty, wondered how they could ever get him to market. He was not peaceable enough to be led by a rope, not by any means! Larry was of the opinion that the only way to take him to market was in the shape of sausages and chops. Mrs. McQuirk, seeing the Malones leaning over the pigsty, came and leaned with them; soon after that here came Granddaddy Tracy. And before you knew it, there was the whole of Ballycooly congregated around the Malone pigsty.

"'Tis the great old beast he is. He'll bring a tidy sum, woman dear," said Mrs. Riley.

"But how I'll get him to market is what I don't know," said Mrs. Malone.

"Don't there be enough good-sized lads in Ballycooly to lead him with a rope?" asked Mrs. McCann.

"There's me," said Larry.

"And there's my twins and Tim Riley," said Mrs. Kilfoyle. "Couldn't the four o' ye manage him?"

"Sure," said Tim Riley, "we'll manage him. When do you want him taken to town, Mrs. Malone, ma'am?"

"Next week a-Tuesday," said Mrs. Malone.

"Were I in your two shoes, Mrs. Malone dear, I'd wash him before I'd send him. You'll get a better price and him clean, maybe."

"Saints keep us!" cried Mrs. Malone, rolling her eyes to the sky. "I could easier kill myself than let that beast of a creature kill me, and me washing him!"

Long after the rest had left the pigsty, Alanna remained there, looking thoughtfully at the pig. Presently she called to Larry, and the two stood there together, talking in animated tones. On the night of the following Monday, when Alanna

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went to her room she carried with her the kitchen knife and some lengths of clothesline that had lain curled in rings on top of the cupboard. Larry joined her, and for some time the two were busy over something there.

At early dawn Mrs. Malone suddenly woke up and listened. Something was shuffling and bumping and wheezing outdoors. Something was grunting and whining and protesting. Mrs. Malone trembled with fear. Was the pig dying on them? It surely sounded that way. But presently there was quiet again, and, with a prayer for the pig's safety, she fell asleep.


At breakfast time she remembered the disturbance of the night before, and asked the children if they had heard any noise. Alanna and Larry nudged each other violently, but made no reply.

"Is it mischief is in it?" asked Mrs. Malone suspiciously. "I'd best be seeing if the pig is all right."

She rose up and went outdoors, the children following. At the pigsty she leaned for support on the rickety old structure that had endured the wear and tear of a succession of pigs one after the other for fifteen years.

"Saints help us!" she cried in distress. 'Twas thieves I heard!"

The pig was gone!



Chapter Nine

Come with us!" cried Alanna and Larry, and each took hold of her by an arm and drew her around behind the cow shed. There, on a thick plat of clover, his forefeet tied each with each and his hind feet in similar fashion, his snout fastened in a tight noose, lay the pig. He was so clean he was spotless, and so white he was pink. He was angry, but he was conquered. And around his neck was Alanna's yellow hair ribbon—or rather both of them knotted together—tied in a gay yellow bow on the back of his neck.

Mrs. Malone couldn't believe her eyes. "I'm just dreaming a dream," she said, "and any minute I'll wake up."

"It wasn't a dream for us," said Larry. "We worked like dogs to get the slipnoose over his snout, and his feet tied. We tried to do it while he was still asleep, but that didn't work."

"Dogs!" cried Alanna. "Musha me, we worked harder than all the dogs of the world to drag him over here where he'd keep clean until the boys came to take him to town. It was a—a—a labor of Hercules." This was Teacher Alanna remembering a story she had read to the class.

"And how did ye get him scrubbed?"

"That was easy," said Larry. "We fastened your scrubbing brush to a stick, and after we got him out of the dirty sty I poured water on him while Alanna scrubbed."

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"It is a true word," said Mrs. Malone. "I mind now I heard the pump a-going."

At eight o'clock Tim and Peter and Brian came, bringing a heavy rope. Mrs. Malone barricaded herself and little Pat in the house for safety, and Alanna climbed to the top of the cow shed. It was not difficult to fasten the strong rope to his leg, and then to undo the ropes on his snout and his feet. He was offered food and water, but refused both, dashing about in the wildest sort of way. Then there was the exciting trip to town, during which he was sometimes pulling, sometimes being pulled, but never at any moment behaving like a gentleman.

The cattle market was held on the Common, and was an affair of much confusion. There were cows and calves and horses and donkeys and sheep and goats and grunTERS and squealers. There were more squealers than anything else. People were forever getting tangled in ropes and trod on by hooves and shouted at by men and screamed at by children and scolded by women. There was a perfect Babel of babble. Some one or other was forever stepping on baby pigs or baby men, and either a mother pig grunted at him or a human mother cried angrily, "Leave be a-steppin' on my child!" Mrs. McGowan was doing a thriving business at the Blue Goose Inn, and she seized upon Alanna (surely you don't think Alanna stayed at home and missed all these doings!) and hired her to wash cups and plates, for many of the farmers had started from home at dawn and were wanting a breakfast. In the lull between a late breakfast and the preparations for a noon dinner, Alanna took down the Inn sign—a board with a cerulean-blue goose painted upon it—scrubbed it clean, and hung it again with the help of Tim Riley. After that, it is no exaggeration

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to say that it could be seen from three times as far away as before.

In the early afternoon the pig was sold, and brought quite a handsome sum in half-crowns, florins, and shillings. These were handed over to Alanna, who put them in her pocket, and, borrowing a needle and thread from Mrs. McGowan, sewed the mouth of the pocket up tight lest something happen to that load of money.

Alanna helped Mrs. McGowan again with the dinner, and had a couple of shillings and her dinner for her help. Larry and the Kilfoyle twins had gone home, but Tim waited for Alanna. He had the feeling that that heavy pocketful of money needed a strong-armed escort. On the way home he told Alanna a good piece of news.

"Alanna, I've been up to the Big House two Sunday mornings before church, sitting in the library, let alone by myself reading books, and I'm to be let do that all summer. And last Sunday I went up a little earlier and watched Johnny Kinsella cleaning the car, and he showing me how it worked. To know how to do a thing isn't any load to carry, and he's going to show me next time how to run it."

"Do they have fine books?" asked Alanna.

"Finer than fine," said Tim fervently, and added, "I would like to thank your Uncle Roddy, Alanna. 'Twas himself that did it for me. Saints help me, but I was low in my mind that morning up on the top of Hillside!"

When Alanna got home she found her mother sitting before the chest of drawers, with one drawer open, weeping.

"Mother jewel!" cried Alanna. "Whatever is the matter?"

"I was reading your Aunt Judy's letter," said her mother.

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Alanna turned pale. Next she brightened up, and cutting the stitches that closed her pocket, poured the contents upon her mother's lap.

"That's for the pig," she said, and laying her two shillings on the rest she added, "and this I earned myself, as well as a dinner."

Mrs. Malone counted the money and tucked it into the bottom of the drawer. "Your Aunt Judy—" she began.

"May Aunt Judy go to Ballyhack!" cried Alanna angrily, as we would say "Go to Guinea!" or whatever farthest-away place we knew the name of. Whether Ballyhack is on the map with the other thousand-and-one Ballys, I could not possibly say.

But her mother was not so easily persuaded away from the subject. "I'll be answering your Aunt Judy's letter this week, Alanna, and I'll be telling her I'll lend her the loan of one of my childer."

Here they wept on each other's shoulders.

"And, Alanna darlin', keep up your courage, child. Larry is only barely twelve, and you a good fourteen. It will have to be you."

Alanna fled from the house, ran around to her lean-to room, and wept into Black Molly's old manger. Tears upon tears she shed, and called upon one saint after another for help. And when no immediate help seemed to be coming from any of them, she called upon Uncle Roddy.

"Uncle Roddy! Uncle Roddy! Uncle Roddy!"

As it happened, Uncle Roddy was on the Indian Ocean in a dirty old tramp steamer carrying a load of American sewing machines to Vladivostok and couldn't be expected to hear

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her. But she didn't know that. Always she had the feeling in regard to Uncle Roddy that he was just around the turn of the road, by the big boulder, and might come steppin' in at any minute whatever. The very thought of him, however, was comforting, and the mere calling upon his name gave her courage. She lifted her head out of the manger and wiped away her tears. After all, if her going meant more for the others in the way of food and clothing, why should she not go? And, of course, she wouldn't stay away any longer than was necessary. But oh, that big wet ocean lying between herself and the home she loved!

That week, sure enough, a letter was despatched to Mrs. Judy Sheridan, Honeysuckle Farm, Green Spring Valley, Maryland, U. S. A. The entire family took it to town to post it, Larry dragging Pat in his wagon, and Alanna and her mother walking side by side, deep in conversation. As they left the town and were returning home they met Doctor Garrigue, who stopped his car to ask how they were coming on.

"Not any too well, Doctor dear; I'm losing one of my childer," said Mrs. Malone.

Doctor Garrigue looked sharply at the three children. Larry and Alanna were none too stout, but they looked well, and little Pat looked quite the pink of perfection.

"What ails them?" he asked.

Mrs. Malone, with a sudden burst of tears, replied, "Alanna will be leaving me to go to my sister Judy in that wild and wicked country of America where there are no bogs at all and no Little People!"

"Why, Alanna, that's fine!" said the doctor heartily. "That's a great opportunity. You will see new things and learn a

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great deal. When you come back again we'll be proud of you!" With a wave of his hand the doctor went on his way.

Alanna's drooping spirits picked up a little. She had never thought that her going to America would be an opportunity; she had considered it only as a sort of punishment: She imagined, for one thing, that it would always be raining there. Maybe, after all, the sun would shine a time or two.

Spring came, and all the country round about took on a tender green hue. Even the bogs came to life. The thorn bushes were green in April, and blackbirds were singing in the hedges. With Easter came Stacey, home for the holidays, and one day she called for Alanna and the two rode to Silver Glen. Here, up on the hillsides, there were still great ever-green branches carrying patches of snow; but the snow was melting with tiny tinklings as its crystals broke into drops of water. In little hollows anemones had ventured forth, looking like dainty little dancers on a green stage. Noting these and other lovely signs of spring, the two girls walked beside Silver Stream. And after Stacey had told about the school at Dublin and the wonderful Rose, and after a silence had followed that, Alanna ventured to tell Stacey about Aunt Judy in America.

"And only last week," she said, "we had a letter from Aunt Judy, and very soon she said that she would send the money for the journey, and a little more besides to buy me a few clothes."

"That's fine, Alanna!" said Stacey warmly. "I should like to see you in some nice new clothes."

"I dunno will I be any happier in 'em," said Alanna.

But Stacey was quite enthusiastic over the trip, and asked Alanna many questions about how she was going, and in what

ship, which Alanna was unable to answer. In her own mind Stacey began to revolve plans for helping Alanna, but of this she said nothing. They walked from one end to the other of Silver Glen, following the stream, and Johnny Kinsella went around with the car and met them at the other end.

In another week Stacey was gone again, and in a week beyond that came a foreign draft from Aunt Judy, with the admonition that Mrs. Malone and Alanna should not spend so much on Alanna's clothes that there would not be enough left for the sea passage. Mrs. Malone and Alanna, therefore, went to town and asked Father Ryan to have it cashed and give them only what was not needed for traveling expenses. The rest he was to put away until it was time to buy the ticket.

"For as sure as I hide it at home somewhere it will be lost on me," said Mrs. Malone, "or some tinker, or gypsies maybe, going the roads in the warm weather, will steal it, or even those omadhauns of hens will get it and eat it up."

Therefore, when Father Ryan had had the draft cashed he put the greater part of it away in his own safe, and handed five pounds to Mrs. Malone. Five pounds! What unheard-of wealth! Alanna and her mother stared at each other in astonishment.

"It is a great responsibility," said Father Ryan, laughing at them. "Be sure you don't spend it all on earrings and bracelets."

They left Father Ryan and stood outside the store, hesitating. Did they dare go in and spend the money this very day? Wouldn't they get everything wrong in their excitement?

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"We'll get Mrs. Garrigue," said Mrs. Malone. "Sure she'll know what's what."

Mrs. Garrigue was only too happy to help. You' should have seen how boldly she took them into the shop, as though the spending of five pounds was an everyday matter with her. Two bright shop-girls had to be brisk, indeed, to keep up with her demands.

"What would you like to get first of all, Alanna?" she asked.

"Pink hair-ribbons," said Alanna promptly.

And so, beginning with the pink hair-ribbons, they also bought a very simple dark blue hat, coat, and dress, a very modest pair of shoes, some handkerchiefs, and some underwear—not the gay pink and salmon-colored silk things one sees in shop windows (alas, no!), but just plain union suits, for the five pounds could be stretched no further. Between you and me, I think Mrs. Garrigue, on the sly, stretched it a little out of her own rather shabby purse.

When the Ballycooly folk heard of these wonderful purchases they were deeply interested. Alanna and her mother spread the things out on the big bed, and they really did look wonderful. All afternoon their neighbors were coming in to see Alanna's finery. And when each one of the mothers of Ballycooly went home afterward, she returned presently bringing a gift.

"You might be forgetting us over in America, Alanna darlin'," said Mrs. McQuirk, "and so I brought you this scarf that my boy over there sent me. It is the style they wear over there, so you'll be looking proper when you get there. Sure it's too gay for me anyway, and me the age I am, saints help

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me!" She handed Alanna a silk scarf of dark blue with white dots. It quite took Alanna's breath away.

Mrs. McCann, hurrying and out of breath by reason of the pot boiling on the fire and maybe boiling over if she didn't hurry back, put something into Alanna's hand. It was a little calico bag containing a couple of spools of thread and some needles stuck into a bit of flannel.

"Sure it's just a little thing I fetched you," she said, "but it will be useful and you on the ocean where you can't step into a shop to buy a spool of thread. And a seam is likely to burst on you any old time, or a hem give way."

Mrs. Riley brought a handkerchief with a lace border. "I wore it at my wedding, Alanna my dear. Jem and I, we were the gay young couple then, and it the flax-pulling season, and the moon round and full when we stood up before Father Ryan, the good man, to be married, and he only a youngish man himself in those days. Sure, I wouldn't give the handkerchief to anybody but you, my dear, and you a warm-hearted girl as any could be."

Mrs. Lally brought a little cook book advertising a baking powder. "'Tis a handy thing to have in a strange country where the cooking may be as poor as poor," she said. "You never can tell. Keep it by you, Alanna, and betimes you can maybe make something tasty for your aunt. I've had it by me this many a year. It's grand dishes it does be telling about. The only trouble is, the baking powder itself is the smallest part of them. There's many another thing does be going into each dish, eggs and flour and butter and the like. Howane'er, it's pleasant reading it is."

Mrs. Kilfoyle brought a bright, though not new, shilling.

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"Sure, Alanna darlin', here's a little spending-piece for you. I've had it some years. And in my mind"—here she gave a gay laugh—"I've bought the whole world with it, now this, now that. It's a bit of magic, no less, that one little shillin' could do so much. Indeed, I'd never have the heart to spend it myself at all! And may good luck go wid ye, Alanna!"



"HAVE YE HEARD ABOUT OLD GRANNY LALLY THIS DAY?"

Mrs. Tracy rummaged about her house for a long time before she found anything that could be spared to give to Alanna, and when she did come hurrying in with it, she had in her hand a neat little packet of small squares of calico and gingham and percale, suitable for making a quilt.

"Alanna," she said, "we'll miss you out of Ballycooly, my dear, you that's been a good child all of your life, barrin' a few fights with your two fists. Here's some patches you might be wanting to make yourself a quilt with, putting them together

at odd times when you're not streelin' up and down the fancy streets of Baltimore. Och, it's many a time a bit of sewing in the hand is a great comfort. And have ye heard about old Granny Lally this day? Wandering about the house on her two feet she is, and crying, the creature, because she has no gift to bring you, and you going away."

And now, each of the Ballycooly mothers having been twice to the Malone house—once to see Alanna's purchases and once to bring their gifts—came a third time, this time all together, to look and see how did their gifts look displayed upon the big bed with Alanna's new clothes. Then Mrs. Malone wet up a cup of tea for everybody, and it was a very fine occasion.


Meanwhile the undiscouraged spring pushed up grassblade after grassblade and thrust out blossom after blossom, until, sitting on the pump trough, Alanna could look out over the rolling country and feel that she was in fairyland. Everything on hill and dale shimmered with beauty. Mrs. Malone and Larry, bent over the potato planting, lifted their weary backs occasionally to watch a lark's flight or listen to the finches piping in the thickets. Summer was coming, the time of plenty in those seven little gardens back beyond the homes of Ballycooly; the time when one could go to the garden every day and fetch back something to put into the kettle over the fire. And, too, the time when one did not perish with the cold.

One morning, while Alanna was tidying the house and Larry and his mother were busy in the garden, who should come to the door but Aunt Anastasia herself! Alanna ran quickly to the car. In her heart she was saying to herself that surely all the lady saints in heaven must look just like Aunt

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Anastasia. And Aunt Anastasia looked at Alanna and thought in her heart that here was a warm-hearted, honest little Irish lass that needed only a bit of help to become a fine woman. She thought of that room in which Alanna took so much pride, and that so many would have scorned. She noted Alanna's neat appearance—patched, to be sure, but clean—and remembered the joyous sound of her laughter. Here was a girl who made the most of what she had and wasn't forever fretting for what she couldn't have. Thinking these things, Aunt Anastasia's face was friendly and smiling as she leaned from the car and spoke.

"Alanna my dear, I have some good news for you!"



Chapter Ten

*I*s it that I'm not going after all?" asked Alanna.

"No, it is that you *are* going, and that you are to go as nursemaid to a pair of six-year-old twins."

Alanna's mouth was like a volcanic crater pouring forth surprise instead of smoke and flames, and her eyes were two round blue lakes of astonishment.

"It happens most conveniently for you, Alanna," went on Aunt Anastasia. "Stacey told me about your going, and I have kept my eyes on the advertisements in the papers for some one who wanted the help of a young girl across the ocean. A week ago I saw an advertisement for a nurse-girl, and have written back and forth with Mrs. Webster about it. She is going on the *Tusculania* to New York, and will sail on the fifth of June from Queenstown. Of course, you have no experience —"

Here Alanna interrupted. "I've had experience with twins, ma'am! Look at Peter and Brian Kilfoyle!"

"Of course, you would have to wash and dress them —"

"I've done that for Pegeen, ma'am, ever since the day you gave her the pretty clothes."

"And amuse them —"

"Sure I've amused little Pat since the day he was born!"

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"And I will take you myself to Queenstown, Alanna. Won't you be glad to be with some one aboard ship instead of alone?"

Alanna considered the matter and finally said, "Well, maybe, ma'am, and maybe not. If I'm to have twins on my hands, which is much worse than two single children, how at all can I get away by myself and cry for my mother?"

"Crying for your mother won't do you any good, will it?"

"Oh, no! But it will ease me, I'm thinking."

"Well, now, Alanna, listen, my dear. I want to give you a little present —"

"Oh, but Miss Anastasia darling!" interrupted Alanna. "I have so many presents already! New clothes and everything! But —"

"But what?"

"If you don't mind my telling you, ma'am, that little Pegeen Kilfoyle has broke the hearts of the other little wee girls of Ballycooly by the new clothes you gave her. On a Sunday when we're all on the way to church little Rose Tracy and little Katie and Anna McCann does be weeping tears in their old clothes, and Miss Pegeen traveling along so fine."

"Then I've done a great piece of mischief," said Aunt Anastasia.

"You could undo it as easy as easy!" said Alanna.

"Very well, Alanna," said Aunt Anastasia, with a laugh, "I'll take the hint you are offering me. I'll send down three little dresses and three pairs of shoes and stockings to you by Johnny Kinsella, and you may give them to the little girls."

"It does seem a pity for me to be going away," said Alanna, "with three more of them needing an eye kept on them for

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fear they'll be spoiling their clothes. I have kept a very fierce eye on Pegeen, and she hasn't a hole in either stocking yet."

Sure enough, next day Johnny Kinsella brought down the little clothes, and Alanna joyfully distributed them, making it plainly understood that these were for Sundays only. When Mrs. Kilfoyle heard of it she said, "Praise be! Now those three little spalpeens won't be throwing the black looks at my Pegeen!"

In May the hawthorn hedges were a splendor of white blossoming, and the briar rose was preening itself. Clouds scudded across the sky, and now and again there was a drift of rain. The gorse was thick upon the bogs and upon the hillsides, but was not yet ready to open up its yellow flowers that smell so deliciously like fresh apricots. And now and again at twilight one heard a nightingale tuning up her tiny throat for the glorious song that would be coming from it.

Then in walked June with her clover and her daisies and her altogether lovely loveliness. On the fourth everybody came to say good-by to Alanna and tell her what a dangerous thing a sea voyage was. Mrs. Lally had a great-uncle that was shipwrecked, and he coming home from America, the creature! And this reminded Granddaddy Tracy of Robinson Crusoe, and that reminded Mrs. Malone of something and she clapped her hands together and said, "Sure now I remember that *Robinson Crusoe* is the name of the book I have put away for Alanna's wedding present!"

At that moment there came a knock at the door. Larry opened the door and there stood Johnny Kinsella with a fine new suitcase in his hand.

"For Miss Malone from Miss Anastasia," he said, handing

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the suitcase to Larry, "and Miss Anastasia wants Miss Malone to be ready tomorrow morning at seven o'clock sharp." He tipped his cap and was gone.

Partings are too sorrowful to talk about, and we'd best skip over them. Let us say that Alanna was ready at seven sharp, with all her worldly belongings in the new suitcase, and her heart thumping against her ribs as though he would break his cage. From the car she turned tearful eyes upon Ballycooly, where from every house hands were waved. The Kilfoyle twins even ran along as far as the boggy place in the road, and on the boulder at the turning sat Tim Riley, waving his cap so madly around his head that it looked like twenty caps. In the town they went to Father Ryan's house, where he, after a few earnest and kindly words of advice, gave Alanna a folded paper.

"Put this away in the safest place you have about you, Alanna," he said.

"This new dress has two pockets," said Alanna, and put the paper into one of them.

"It is the money your Aunt Judy sent you for your fare," said Father Ryan. "Take it back to her."

"Am I not going after all?" asked Alanna in astonishment.

"Mrs. Webster will pay your fare in return for your care of her children," said Father Ryan, and gave her his blessing, bidding her be courageous and truthful.

"Father Ryan," said Alanna, as Johnny Kinsella started the car, "courageous I can be, but I dunno can I always be truthful. Sometimes a lie seems to work."

"If it works, Alanna," shouted Father Ryan, with his hands trumpet-shaped about his mouth, "it must be the truth

in disguise!" And he smiled to himself, shook his head, and wondered if he had done right to put courage first and truth only second.

All that long and beautiful June day Alanna watched the country flow backward as they sped along—smoothly where the roads were good, joltingly where they were bad. Now and then she wept a little, and on those occasions Aunt Anastasia said nothing to her. On recovering from one of these weeping spells she got out from the new suitcase the little sewing-kit that Mrs. McCann had given her, and firmly sewed up the pocket that held Aunt Judy's money.

Pleasant roads those are in Ireland, curlycuing about the country, never straight and formal, but always winding and familiar. Now they cross a river, now they wind about the foot of a hill; and there's now a smell of honeysuckle about them as one rides along, now the pleasant fragrance of clover, now the smell of yellow gorse. Sometimes there's a bridge over a river, and sometimes one splashes across a ford with the water up to the hubs. And while green is the restful color that spreads over everything, there's also the yellow of mustard, the brown of bogs, the red of poppies, the pink and white of potato blossoms, the purple of flags—a whole rainbow. And there are little villages like Ballycooly under a protecting hillside, and cities like Waterford on the smooth sea levels. And always in the distance hills that are magnificently purple. Sure the horizons of Ireland tie up in their magical rings plenty of scenery!

What with winding roads and bad roads and a stop for something to eat at a sizable town and a detour where a bridge was down, they did not get to Queenstown until two o'clock.

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Once there, they drove straight to the home of a cousin of Aunt Anastasia. Alanna, familiar only with the town at home, felt that this must be the biggest city in the world. Surely London, that Miss McGrennigan and the school geography both declared to be the world's biggest city, couldn't be bigger than this! She said as much to Johnny Kinsella when he helped her out of the car and carried her suitcase up to the cousin's door. But Johnny grinned and said that London could put Queens-town in its vest pocket and forget that it was there, and then added, "I've been to London once, and I'd like to go again."

"When were you there?" asked Alanna.

"Coming home from the front in nineteen-eighteen," said Johnny, and then stiffened up and tipped his hat to Aunt Anastasia, who gave him some orders, and went back to the car.

In a dream Alanna sat down in the cousin's drawing room in a chair, a puffy affair that let her down farther than she had expected it would, and then bounced her up again. In a dream she drank a cup of hot tea and ate some sandwiches and then drank a cup of milk that Aunt Anastasia thought she should have. In a dream she heard two voices talking, and the voices kept getting farther and farther away. At last she fell asleep with her head on the puffy arm of the puffy chair and had an honest-to-goodness dream in which she was whitewashing the dresses of four small girls to hide the spots on them. She woke with a start (dropping the whitewash brush) and found Aunt Anastasia gently shaking her by the arm. The cousin took her upstairs to wash up and tidy her hair, and when she came down it was time to go to the docks.

Homesick or not homesick, Alanna had a thrill when she

stood upon the dock and looked up at the great black bulk, topped with its great funnels and smokestacks, of the *Tusculania*. She would have examined it in great detail were it not that as she was looking up at it in awestruck fashion something bumped hard against her. It was a small girl with dark hair and great dark eyes.

"If you didn't stand in the way I wouldn't have knocked against you!" said the little girl accusingly, and ran on down the dock. Almost immediately something else bumped into her, and this time it was a small boy with honey-colored hair and eyes as blue as periwinkles.

"I beg your pardon," said the small boy, and was off after the little girl.

Said Alanna to Aunt Anastasia, "I think those must be my twins."

At this moment a very charming young woman came up and introduced herself to Aunt Anastasia as Mrs. Webster, adding, "And where the children are, I don't know. I never do!"

Alanna without speaking hurled herself in the direction the children had taken, and before long came back leading them by the hand.

"Look at what we found, Mother!" said the small girl. "She says she can manage us without half trying!"

"Sure I can," said Alanna.

"How do you know?" asked the small boy.

"We'll see!" said Alanna crisply.

"She begins well," said Mrs. Webster to Aunt Anastasia. "I hope she will continue so throughout the voyage. And now, Alanna, this is Mademoiselle, who will have the children

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for lessons in the forenoons. Mademoiselle, I hope you and Alanna can manage the children between you."

"Oui, Madame," said a pretty young girl dressed in black, with a sweet, pale face and a low voice. Alanna, looking at her, didn't think Mademoiselle could do much in the way of making the children behave.

Johnny Kinsella, who had Alanna's suitcase, handed it to a man who was carrying a dozen or so suitcases all at once up the gangway, and turned to speak to Alanna.

"Keep up your courage, Miss Malone," he said, and tipped his cap and smiled his pleasant smile as Alanna, still holding the twins, went up the gangway behind Mrs. Webster and Aunt Anastasia, who wanted to see what sort of quarters they had.

They were pleasant quarters, indeed—two staterooms with a door between, one for Mrs. Webster, the other for Alanna and the children. In the latter there were two berths, one above the other, against one wall. Both children fought for the upper berth, and Dale, the boy, got it, while Barbara had to be contented with the lower one. Opposite to these was a berth under the porthole, and this was for Alanna. Mademoiselle's stateroom was next to these two. While Alanna was helping the children unpack their clothes and hang them in the narrow wardrobe, Aunt Anastasia slipped away without saying good-by to Alanna, thinking that to be the best thing. It took a good while to get the children's clothes hung; first, because they had so many clothes, and secondly, because they disputed over every hook and hanger. Alanna, in her endeavor to get the job finished, did not notice that the boat was moving. And when at last the three of them went up on deck

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—musha me! there was a whole lake of water between Alanna and the green shores of Ireland!

“Stop! Stop!” cried Alanna in a panic of despair, and all the people in the chairs along the deck laughed with each other. But after all, there was so much that was both strange and interesting on the great ship that Alanna couldn’t be melancholy long. The Imp and the Angel, which were the nicknames of Barbara and Dale, led her a merry chase about the ship, showing her everything. That first evening she hardly dared loosen her hold of them for fear they would climb over the rail and tumble into the sea. At eight o’clock she put them to bed—a lively piece of work—and at nine she crept into her own berth too weary to do anything but fall asleep and sleep the night through.

In the morning Mrs. Webster had a talk with Alanna, asked her many questions, and gave her instructions as to her duties.

“You will have to be firm with the children, Alanna,” she said.

“Firm it is,” said Alanna.

“Very firm.”

“Very firm it is,” said Alanna, and told Mrs. Webster how she had always been firm with the Kilfoyle twins, “and they as big as myself, too, ma’am.”

Mrs. Webster smiled into Alanna’s eager face, and nodded. Alanna was feeling the freshness and courage that morning brings. She took the Imp and the Angel each by a hand and raced with them around the promenade deck, empty at this early hour. After that they went down to breakfast with faces like roses. At their table they found Mademoiselle, who looked much more like a lily. She sat silent while Alanna and the

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twins chattered and laughed. Alanna wondered whether the poor thing could talk at all.

"She's going to teach us French," said the Angel.

"She's not going to teach me," said the Imp. "Me, I'm not going to learn."

"Me neither," said the Angel.

"Maybe she'll thrash you if you don't learn," said Alanna.

"Thrash us!" cried the Imp-and-Angel combination. "Nothing doing!"

Mademoiselle smiled gently but said nothing. They had lessons that morning from nine to eleven, while Alanna did a few errands for Mrs. Webster, roamed about the ship, watched the game of ship tennis in which the players deftly grabbed rings out of the air, and wondered how they were all getting on in Ballycoolly without her. "Och blathers, how my mother must miss me!" she thought.

At eleven o'clock the children came from the hands of Mademoiselle rather subdued.

"Well, children," asked their mother, "how do you like being educated?"

"On the arm, do you mean?" asked the Imp.

"She means fascinated," said the Angel. "Don't you remember how the doctor fascinated us both on the arm in Paris?"

"No, I don't mean vaccinated," said their mother, "I mean being taught the French language."

"Oh, that!" said the Angel, and the Imp, with a very excellent shrug, said "Pouf!" and blew away the French language airily.

That afternoon they made so much trouble for Alanna that she was quite distracted. She endured it with good humor,

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however, until they ran away from her and hid their naughty little selves. High and low she searched for them—in the wireless room, in the writing room, on every deck, in nearly every stateroom, calling them all the bad names in her vocabulary, which, after all, were not very desperately bad. “Omad-hauns!” she cried a thousand and one times. And then at last she found them, spanked them soundly, and took them to their mother.

“Mother! Mother!” they cried. “Alanna spanked us!” They were outraged.

“Alanna,” said Mrs. Webster very gravely, “I never allow anyone to spank my children.”

“Indeed, ma’am, I didn’t know their skins were sacred,” said Alanna hotly. “I thrashed ’em good, and it ought to do ’em good. They hid on me, and me thinking they were at the bottom of the sea. Up in one of the lifeboats they were, scrooging down the way I wouldn’t see them. At home, ma’am, we wouldn’t stand it if Larry did the likes of that, or little Pat. Sure, if I mustn’t spank them again I won’t, I give you my word, but drowned they’ll be, and what will you do then, at all?”

The twins had ceased weeping to listen to this speech of Alanna’s, and to see what effect it had on their mother. Suddenly their mother burst into a gay laugh as she looked at Alanna’s anxious face.

“After all,” she said, “I don’t think your spanking did them much harm.”

“Not it!” said Alanna. “Besides, I can do a good deal worse. My muscles are very strong, what with one thing and another that I’ve done in my life. I’ve done a deal.”

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"What have you done?" asked the Angel.

"Oh, whitewashing and flax pulling and pitatie lifting and weeding and teaching school and everything."

"Tell us about it," suggested the Imp with an angelic smile, and off went the three of them, as peaceable as you please.

Mrs. Webster looked after them and laughed, and sighed, and said to herself, "Maybe Alanna is right. Perhaps their little skins have been kept too sacred."

Alanna took the children to their favorite nook in the stern, where they could look out at that long path of water bubbling and boiling in the ship's wake. Urged on by their eager questions she told them all she knew of Ballycooly and the town. This was a new kind of life to these two children who in their short lives had known only ease and luxury. They were particularly interested in the Kilfoyle twins, so much so that for the rest of the journey the Imp was Brian and the Angel was Peter. Indeed, they would not answer to any other names.

Three nights later there was a bad storm, and the ship rocked and rolled and pitched and plunged in a very alarming way, indeed. Alanna thought her last hour had come. She called to all the saints to come to her aid, and asked fervently that she might be allowed once more to put her two feet down among grassblades. There being so many saints, she called upon them in alphabetical order so that she might not overlook a single one. But before she reached the letter H she became very seasick, and then even grassblades didn't seem to matter. When she heard Mrs. Webster call to her from the next room she could hardly stagger to her.

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"Alanna, can you get to Mademoiselle's room, do you think?" asked Mrs. Webster.

"Sure I can!" said Alanna stoutly, and wondered how she possibly could.

"You're not frightened, are you, Alanna?"

"Not I, ma'am," said Alanna firmly, her body trembling with fear.

"If Mademoiselle is frightened, stay with her a while, there's a dear!"

Alanna made a staggering way to Mademoiselle's cabin and entered. Mademoiselle was groaning.

"It's me, Alanna," said Alanna. "Is it scairt you are, Mademoiselle?"

"Oui," said Mademoiselle faintly.

"Well, you're all right now—I've come," said Alanna, and crept into the berth beside the French girl.

"Merci," said Mademoiselle, and put her arms about Alanna, holding her as a drowning man is said to hold a straw (much good that would do him), if not tighter. And presently, when the storm subsided somewhat, they both fell asleep, Ireland in the arms of France, as you might say. When daylight came peeping into the porthole, Alanna awoke and crept back to the children.

Two mornings later the twins had her up early, and with her head at the porthole she looked out upon honest-to-goodness land.

"It's America!" said the twins with awed American voices.


"Well, why wouldn't it be, when that's where we started for?" said Alanna.

"It's the biggest country in the whole world!" said the twins.

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Alanna, looking out the porthole, saw gas tanks and towers and spires and the Statue of Liberty and skyscrapers and long piers and a forest of smokestacks and funnels. And because it was such a big sight and the port hole such a small window, she could not take it all in at once. And besides, her mind's eye was already occupied with a short length of dusty road lined along one side with seven little thatched and whitewashed cottages.

"You just ought to see Ballycooly!" she said.



Chapter Eleven

Eleven o'clock that morning Mrs. Webster and Mademoiselle and the children were on a railroad car going south from New York. For Baltimore was Mrs. Webster's home as well as Alanna's destination. All were feeling well again except Mademoiselle—and perhaps a Frenchman or Frenchwoman never feels entirely well and comfortable in any country except his (or her) own. She had very little to say, and said that briefly. Her eyes were red from weeping, for the poor young creature was desperately homesick.

"Are you comfortable, Mademoiselle?" asked Mrs. Webster.

"Oui, Madame."

"You do not feel ill?"

"Non, Madame."

"You look a little pale. Would you like the window opened?"

"Non, Madame."

"Shall Alanna get you a drink of water?"

"Non, Madame."

"You are quite comfortable?"

"Oui, Madame."

Alanna, hearing this conversation, concluded that the French language was very stingy of words, and that it must be easy

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for the French children to parse it, if indeed they have to parse at all.

By twelve o'clock they had passed through Philadelphia, and at half-past twelve they went into the dining car for lunch. Alanna was very much surprised. She had been hungry for some time, and wondered when and where they would get something to eat. Also, the deft colored waiters, with their smiling faces and their neat white jackets, were a great matter of astonishment to her. She had already determined, however, in that sturdy mind of hers, that she would not show any surprise at anything, no matter what. "Sure America is a great country," went her thoughts, "but I'll not be jumping out o' my skin on that account." And so she sat calmly, with a twin on each side of her, telling them to mind their manners, and minded her own as well as she could. Indeed, when one's heart is warm and friendly and one's eyes are open to new experiences, why then one's manners really take care of themselves. Alanna only spilled a glass of water, and there are worse things than that.

Soon after they had left the dining car they were crossing a great river and not long after that they were approaching Baltimore. In spite of herself Alanna could not help getting a bit excited. The twins, who were still calling themselves Brian and Peter, were begging to be allowed to take Alanna home with them.

"Not today," said their mother. "But some Sunday we will drive out the Green Spring Valley Road and bring Alanna home with us to spend the day." And they had to be satisfied with that.

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At this moment a man stuck his head in the car door and cried out in a big voice, "BAL . . . TI . . . MORE!"

"Yes, sir!" said Alanna loudly, and rose up with her suitcase in a firm grip. The twins stared at her, and Alanna, coming to herself, gave a peal of laughter. "There I am, jumping out o' my skin, just when I said I wouldn't," she said.

After that there was much confusion—getting suitcases ready, getting into one's coat, getting the twins safely off the car, meeting Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter and introducing them to Mrs. Webster, being kissed on both cheeks by Mademoiselle. At last—dear knows how!—Alanna found herself on the driver's seat of a farm wagon, firmly wedged between stout Uncle Peter and stout Aunt Judy, her hands feeling anxiously about for her suitcase, although she knew very well that it was safe in the back of the wagon.

Alanna now had very little time really to think, between the many questions Aunt Judy asked her and the many bits of information Uncle Peter gave her.

"Were the people kind to you on the boat?" asked Aunt Judy.

"I'm taking you around by the Lexington Market, Alanna, to let you see it. A great old set of sheds it is, and we going there with our stuff these thirty years," said Uncle Peter.

"And has your mother still got the old chest of drawers, Alanna? I mind me of that old chest well, and it holding our finery when we were girls, and all."

"Look, Alanna, yonder's the monnymint of George Washington, that long column with him atop. A grand man he was. But the monnymint is getting dirty, and needs a good

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washing, and that's a pun." Here Uncle Peter gave a pleased "Haw! Haw!"

But at last, before the long ride was over, even Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter grew silent, and as the sun went slipping down in the west they took without a word that lovely ride up the Green Spring Valley, with its big houses on the tops of the hills on each side, and its little ancient stone houses and mills in the valley bottom, along the stream. Nobody, it seemed, had taken the trouble to whitewash these little stone houses, but they had troubled to build two-story porches on the front of them, a thing that astonished Alanna greatly. But after a while she grew very sleepy, and did her desperate best to keep her eyes from closing.

"Would we be going around by the cemetery to show Alanna our children's graves?" asked Uncle Peter.

"We would not," said Aunt Judy firmly. "We would be getting home as quick as quick, to have supper and get this child to bed."

"Praise be!" said Alanna to herself, and closed her eyes and leaned her head on Uncle Peter's rough coat-sleeve, and knew no more until they arrived at Honeysuckle Farm.

The farm deserved its lovely name, for honeysuckle climbed all over the front porch, up tree-trunks, over trellises, and upon the fence. The delightful fragrance came out to meet them as they entered the gate. Through Alanna's head raced the wild ambition to build a porch on the house at home—no, a porch on every house in Ballycooly! But the thought raced promptly out again, for Alanna did not waste her thinking powers on things she knew to be impossible. Indoors, Alanna was taken up to her room, a little spotless place up under the

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roof, with a window looking out over a big cornfield and an orchard beyond. Here she hung up her wonderful new clothes on hooks on the wall, wriggled into her old calico dress, slipped on her white apron, and hurried down to the kitchen to help Aunt Judy get supper.

Aunt Judy was crying into the roller towel.

"Aunt Judy, whatever is the matter?" asked Alanna.

"I'm crying for joy," said Aunt Judy, wiping her eyes. "Alanna darlin', promise me you'll never leave us!"

Alanna's face grew very pale.

"It's like having my own little Judy, having you," went on Aunt Judy, "and I don't want to lose you while the world stands."

Alanna sat down weakly on a chair, with her eyes looking out of her face like great lamps.

"I knew I was going to love you," said Aunt Judy. "Already I'm as fond of you as I can be. You must stay with us forever, Alanna."

Alanna stood up again and her fists were clenched.

"If I can't go back home the instant minute I want to, I'll go right up now and get my clothes and go home right away!" she said.

Uncle Peter came in. "Come with me, Alanna," he said, "and I'll show you around while your Aunt Judy is getting supper."

Alanna went with him, a big idea buzzing in her head like a bumble bee in a flower. Uncle Peter showed her his little farm with pride, but only half of her attention was on what he was saying. Nevertheless, she was pleased with the farm, and it seemed to her to be a very prosperous one. Uncle

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Peter must be one of these millionaires that are so abundant in America.

"Do you have any bogs here, Uncle Peter?" she asked.

"Nary a bog," said Uncle Peter.

"Where do you get your peat, then?"

"We don't burn peat, we burn wood."

"Why, Uncle Peter, how extravagant of you!" said Alanna.

"Are you a millionaire? You must be!"

"No such luck," said Uncle Peter, "or I'd have an automobile to be bringing my Irish niece home in, instead of old Nags and the farm wagon."

When they went in to supper Aunt Judy said nothing more about Alanna staying forever, and Alanna sat down with a good appetite to Aunt Judy's good supper, served on dishes that all matched each other. There were hot biscuits to eat, and butter of Aunt Judy's own making, and honey from their own hives, and cheese as yellow as a harvest moon, and tea in a brown teapot with all the sugar you wanted and cream that would put Black Molly to shame.

This thought of Black Molly sobered Alanna down. Her mother and Larry and little Pat would be in luck if they had the makings of a bit of stew and nothing else at all. Alanna's lip curved down mournfully, and Uncle Peter was terribly afraid she was going to cry, and tried to think of a joke that would make her laugh, but not a joke would come.

"My mother doesn't have any sugar in her tea," said Alanna gloomily.

Aunt Judy leaned over and put three teaspoonfuls of sugar into Alanna's tea, and said, a little sharply, "Much good it

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would do your mother if you were to go without sugar in your tea!"

Well, that was true. But there was something else on Alanna's mind besides the things her mother didn't have. She knew that when she went up to bed she was going to do something she shouldn't, and she knew she was going to do it, anyway. But at this point Uncle Peter, to his own happy surprise, made a pun, and what's more, Alanna laughed at it. And when Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy heard that lovely bluebell peal of laughter, they looked at each other, and their hands met in a warm grasp under the table. They were congratulating each other that they had this child.

Alanna had intended that on the following morning she would unsew the pocket of her new blue dress and take the money down to Aunt Judy at the breakfast table and surprise her with it. But when she went upstairs that night with her candle, she got out the little sewing-kit again and took another line of stitches across the mouth of the pocket that held the money, sewing it as strongly as she could. Then she said "There!" and hung the dress upon a nail. If, she thought, there were any more threats to keep her forever, here was money to take her home at once. Then she went to bed without saying her prayers. Somehow, when you yield so firmly to temptation you really haven't the face to pray right afterward. No, you really couldn't.

Next morning after breakfast, when she had helped Aunt Judy with the dishes and the tidying up of the house, there came a knock at the door, and there stood a girl of fifteen, as pretty as a picture, who smilingly said, "I'm Rose Parsons,

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and your Aunt Judy said I might be your special friend while you're here."

Alanna looked at her and said, "How nice of you to have Rose for your name!"

"I had no choice in the matter," said Rose, laughing. "I was named when I was too young to choose a name for myself."

"They made a good choice that named you," said Alanna, and took Rose indoors. In her heart she was saying, "Stacey has a friend named Rose, and now I have also, and that makes me just a trifle of a bit more like Stacey."

Alanna would have enjoyed Rose more if only the burden of the sewed-up pocket were not so heavy upon her mind. But to give that draft or check or whatever it was to Aunt Judy and have no money to take her home if she should want suddenly to go, seemed impossible. "I will be dishonest a while longer, anyway," she thought, "or maybe something will happen—" Her thoughts went no further. It did not occur to her to *make* something happen.

Rose stayed to dinner that day—she lived only on the next farm—and in the afternoon Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy took the two girls to the little cemetery, two miles away—a quaint little place surrounded with a white paling fence. A big weeping willow stood at the gate, its long green wands waving mournfully in the light summer breeze. Here Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy showed Alanna with great pride the graves and the boxes of toys of their two children that had died so many years ago. For the first time in all the years that Aunt Judy had been coming hither, she shed no tears. Instead, she looked with pleasure at her tall, strong young niece, noting

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her smoothly braided hair, her neatness, her friendly smile, and remembered her joyous laughter. "Sister Anna," she thought, "surely has no call to begrudge me this child and she with two more, and me with none at all."

Alanna, looking at the little graves, remembered her father's grave, and wondered whether, when she went back home, she couldn't have a little box with a glass front at its head. But what could she put into the box? Not toys, of course, like these in the boxes of Aunt Judy's children, but something he had treasured. His knife Larry now owned, and his shabby purse with two shillings in it her mother had wrapped up and put away in the big chest of drawers. Whatever at all was there that her father had valued? Only his old brier pipe. Alanna could see him sitting there on his stool by the fire stuffing a bit of tobacco into it, lighting it, and puffing at it contentedly—a quiet man of few words, but tender-hearted beyond anything. A few warm tears dropped upon Alanna's cheeks as she thought of him.

All that early summer Uncle Peter was busy on his farm, with the help of the two scarecrows. No, not real scarecrows with sticks for arms and legs, but an old colored couple, Jake and Mrs. Jake, whose little old log cabin, ages old, stood at the back of the farm, behind the apple orchard. Jake and Mrs. Jake worked with so much faithfulness that it made up for their lack of youth and strength. Jake was a weather prophet, yas'm, he sho' was, and Mrs. Jake could "conjer." That is, she could make a little puppet of sticks and rags (which looked a good bit like herself), set it on her hearth, and let it burn while she waved her skinny arms above it and said strange words, with the warning, "Effen you-all don't watch out

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sum'p'n gwine happen!" All this gave Alanna a fearful pleasure. It was so strange—far stranger than the Little People.

Often Aunt Judy sent Alanna over to the forlorn little cabin at noon or at supper time with a bowl of soup or a big golden



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square of cornpone, and while Alanna went up to the door, nothing would induce her to cross the sill and enter that dark little room. She liked Jake and Mrs. Jake better when they were bending over their hoes in the cornfield or potato patch, Jake in a ragged pair of overalls whose color could be guessed as blue, with a broad-rimmed hat the color of ripe corn, and

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Mrs. Jake in an assortment of old petticoats topped by an apron made of a piece of a faded patchwork quilt, and with a bright pink sunbonnet on her head.

The garden patches were thriving. The corn was a foot high at the time Alanna arrived; the potato plants were a sturdy dark green and their pink flowers were beginning to open; the carrot tops were a light green fuzz; the beans looked like the "hoplites" of Xenophon; the lettuce was already ornamental and would soon be useful; the tomatoes stood by their sticks like short soldiers with tall guns; and the lima beans were beginning their curly climb around their slender poles. They were tall poles, and the lima bean plants had a good all-summer climb before them. But they were not in the least discouraged, for they had plenty of that wonderful urge-and-struggle that keeps all living things a-going.

Aunt Judy cared for the chickens, whose yard and shed were not far from the kitchen door. They were beautiful creatures, some white, some speckled, all fluffy. Some of the hens had little half-grown broods about them. There was a great white rooster, and we might call him as proud as a peacock if that weren't mixing birds a little. Every morning when Uncle Peter went out to work he let out the rooster, whose name was Crusoe, and the two went about together—I had almost said hand in hand! Uncle Peter might be hoeing the bean plants, or tying up the tomatoes, and Crusoe would walk carefully along between two rows of poles or stakes, stepping proudly, and now and then cocking a bright eye at Uncle Peter.

"Crusoe," Uncle Peter would say, pausing in his work to fan

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himself with his hat, "you may come to the frying pan yet, you know."

At this Crusoe would cock his other saucy eye at Uncle Peter and utter an impudent and derisive crow.

Alanna became very busy, delighting to try everything she had never tried before, and especially she liked to try new dishes at the kitchen stove—at least, anything that had baking powder in it. For of course she had the baking powder recipe book and worked her way through it, beginning at page one. There came a day in July when Alanna made such a fine batch of biscuits that Aunt Judy suggested she take some over to Mrs. Jake.

"I haven't seen Mrs. Jake in the fields today," said Aunt Judy, "though I see Jake in the orchard. Maybe she isn't feeling well." Alanna pulled on her sunbonnet—for the sun was hot—took a plate of the biscuits and set out. Going through the orchard she stopped to speak to Jake and give him a sample of her cooking.

"How does that taste, Jake?" she asked.

"Tases like mo'," said Jake, with a nearly toothless grin.

"How is Mrs. Jake?"

"Po'ly dis mawnin', Miss Lanny. She done git out o' bed dis mawnin' an' done fell on de flo'."

"Didn't you pick her up?"

"No'm, I jes' lef' her lay. Look like she didn' wanta get up nohow."

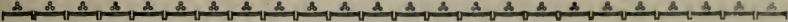
Alanna felt anxious. She had half a mind to go back and tell Aunt Judy about it, when she saw Rose Parsons coming towards her through the orchard. Alanna told her what Jake had said, and the two girls hurried to the little cabin. Reach-

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ing the door, they looked in cautiously, and then Alanna let forth a loud Irish screech and backed away hurriedly. Rose went boldly to the door and looked in. Then she, too, backed away and went to where Alanna stood, at a respectful distance.

“Is it dead she is?” asked Alanna.

A hollow groan came from the cabin.



Chapter Twelve

Rose, much bolder than Alanna, returned to the door and once more looked in. The room was lighted only by the door, for the two windows were boarded up. A small stove was in one end of the room, a forlorn bed in the other end. Everything was dusty and dirty and in disorder. On the floor near the door lay Mrs. Jake, her eyes closed, her mouth wide open and giving an occasional groan.

Alanna looked over Rose's shoulder fearfully, and the two stood staring at the poor old colored woman. Alanna's glance then went sharply around the room. She was thinking. She dimly heard Rose ask her something, but she paid no attention. Her forehead was all knotted up with her thoughts. Presently she spoke.

"Can you lift her, Rose?" she asked.

"Not I!" said Rose with a shudder.

"It's got to be done," said Alanna. "You at the head and me at the foot. If we can't lift we can drag and push."

"We can get Uncle Peter and Jake to do it," said Rose.

"We'll do it right now ourselves," said Alanna firmly. "She needs fresh air right away quick."

"Very well," said Rose, "but it's one of those things you have to do with a rush or you won't do it at all."

They stepped gingerly over the doorsill, and then with a

rush they drew Mrs. Jake outside, and into the shade of a big linden tree near by.

"Now," said Alanna, pulling off Mrs. Jake's sunbonnet and fanning the old woman with it, "you go get Jake and Aunt Judy, and fetch back a pail of water."

Rose hurried off, and in a short time Jake appeared.

"Jake," said Alanna, "get your ax, if you have one, and chop those boards off the windows."

"Lawsy, Miss Lanny, whaffor I gwine do dat?"

"You do it first and I'll tell you why afterwards," said Alanna, rubbing Mrs. Jake's hands.

Jake, with no words but much grumbling that sounded like distant thunder, fetched his ax and got to work on the boards that obstructed the windows. And shortly Aunt Judy and Rose hurried up, the former with a huge bottle of very dark medicine, the latter with a pail of water and a dipper. Aunt Judy, taking charge, bathed Mrs. Jake's face and hands and gave her a generous dose of the medicine. Mrs. Jake opened her eyes as well as her mouth, and complained of the misery in her back. She was rather pleased than otherwise with the excitement she had made, and began to enjoy her misery.

"Aunt Judy," said Alanna, "we can't put her back into that dirty house, can we?"

Aunt Judy looked in the door. "We can't indeed," she said emphatically. "I've scolded Mrs. Jake often enough about her untidy housekeeping. But who is going to clean it? Jake wouldn't know how."

"I know how," said Alanna. She stepped again to the door and looked in. "It isn't half as bad as my room at home was

when Black Molly moved out. Aunt Judy, if I had some whitewash —”

“There’s a big sackful in the tool house,” said Aunt Judy, becoming interested.

“And a brush?”

“There are some old ones in the cellar near the potato bin.”

“Rose,” said Alanna, “we’ll have some fun! Go home and get on a pair of overalls and I’ll show you a thing or two that maybe even an American girl doesn’t know. O glory, Aunt Judy! I dunno how ’tis, but I do be loving the cleaning up of things beyond everything!”

While the girls went to get ready for their job, Jake built a fire in the little stove that stood on the old hearth, heated water, and scrubbed the floor. In at the now open windows came the sun and air, and a very surprised sun and air they must have been to get into the house from which they had so long been shut out. By the time Rose was back, Alanna, in Uncle Peter’s old overalls, had mixed the whitewash, and brought that and the brushes to the little cabin. The two girls then set to with a will, and the rough log walls of the little room were white and clean in a couple of hours.

“I haven’t done any of the work,” said Aunt Judy, returning to see what had been accomplished, “but I will bring Mrs. Jake a gift for herself to match the house. Maybe now, Alanna, she’ll be turning over a new leaf and keep things clean.”

“I’ll see to that,” said Alanna firmly.

Six o’clock saw a wonderful and unaccustomed sight in the old log cabin that had stood there so many years under the shade of the big linden tree. The inside of the cabin was so white, while the outside was still so dark that Rose was of the

opinion that it was like a cocoanut. The sun, on its way down the sky, looked cheerfully in. The little stove glowed and the kettle steamed upon it. Mrs. Jake, lying upon the bed, was dressed in a clean calico dress of Aunt Judy's. Jake, at the stove, was heating Alanna's biscuits in the oven and making tea in an old tin teapot. Rose and Alanna, down in the little ravine behind the cabin, were burning Mrs. Jake's old clothes and the window boards.

"They're starting fresh," said Alanna, rubbing a streak of whitewash off her chin. "But me, I dunno will I be here long enough to keep 'em clean." Here Alanna's voice rippled in a bit of laughter. "Bedad, I think when I go to Heaven I'll ask for the job of cleaning up the whole place fine!"

"I didn't know you Irish people were so fond of being clean," said Rose. Rose herself was an English girl, whose family had come to America from Cape Town when she was a baby.

"'Tis not all of us are," said Alanna, remembering that Bally-cooly as a whole was not as clean as it might be. "But me, I've had a leaning to it ever since I knew Stacey."

"Stacey? Who's that?"

"My best friend," said Alanna proudly.

The two went up to the cabin to bid the two old scarecrows—Mrs. Jake was far less of a scarecrow now—good night.

"Miss Lanny, honey," said Mrs. Jake, "I miss dem boards what was over de windows. I'se a-figurin' as how maybe I'se gwine be all stiff wid de rheumatiz tomorrow 'count o' de wind a-blowin' in on me."

"Shucks!" said Alanna. "That breeze will blow all your misery away, Mrs. Jake. How are you feeling now?"

"Po'ly, chile, po'ly," said Mrs. Jake. "But praise de Lawd

you-all is done my spring cleanin' fo' me. I's been a-puttin' and a-puttin' it off. I sho' is glad I kep' a-puttin' it off."

Next morning Alanna, going through the orchard to look at the cabin and see whether it had kept clean overnight, found neither of the scarecrows there. Looking about she spied them with their hoes in the bean patch. Going to the cabin she found that newspapers had been tacked over the windows. She tore them down and put them in the stove.

It was mid-July before Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter took Alanna to the Lexington Market. During the two days before Aunt Judy and Alanna had gathered all the cherries on two overloaded cherry trees, and filled wooden quart boxes with them, while the scarecrows gathered peas and beans and Uncle Peter dug potatoes. At four o'clock the next morning the household was awake, and Uncle Peter hitched Nags to the market wagon and loaded the wagon with the fruit and vegetables, while Aunt Judy got breakfast ready and Alanna did her best to open her eyes and button her clothes. After a good breakfast they climbed up onto the driver's seat of the wagon, and were off. Dawn was spreading up out of the east when they had arisen, and by five o'clock daylight was over the earth, cool and clear. They rode silently. Alanna could not keep that sewed-up pocket out of her mind. It was a great load. And yet she had only to unsew the pocket and give the money to Aunt Judy to be rid of the worry it caused her. Aunt Judy had never again spoken to Alanna about remaining with them forever, but she feared that it might still be in the back of Aunt Judy's mind. So often Aunt Judy was looking at her in a strange way. Maybe she was making plans to keep her a prisoner on the farm. Alanna hoped that Heaven and all the

saints would forgive her, but she would not unsew that pocket yet, no matter how heavily it weighed upon her mind.

As they rode along, other market wagons came into the road from other roads and lanes, until there was a little procession of them, all alike bound for Baltimore. Soon the sun was shining brightly, and far off they could see, from the top of a hill, the spires and towers of the city below them. Presently Uncle Peter began to point out various buildings to Alanna.

"Do you seen the big green stretch yonder, Alanna? That's the Druid Hill Park, and if there's fairies anywhere outside of Ireland, it's there they are. Look at the cross yonder that sparkles like gold in the sun. That's the cathedral, and we'll take you there on a Sunday sometime. There's the Washington monnymint, that needs a cleaning as bad as anything. And that dark-looking thing that might be a monnymint isn't one at all, but just the old ancient shot tower, and nothing more. It's a grand sight it is, and a big city it is. And away back beyond is the Chesapeake Bay—pretty blue water that runs to the ocean itself. There's plenty of land and too much water entirely in this world, I'm thinkin'. Sure you can raise pitaties and the like out o' the land, but what can you get from the water besides an odd salt mackerel now and again?" Here he winked an eye very jovially, but Alanna, who thought that fresh fish came from fresh water and salt fish from salt water, didn't even smile, much less laugh.

At last they arrived at that line of old market sheds that run for several blocks down the middle of Lexington Street, and that have stood there for several generations. Who knows, indeed, but what they were there first and Baltimore, from 1727 on, grouped itself around them? There's nothing strange

about that. There's more than one woman who, when she's looking for a new house to live in, chooses first of all a suitable room for a nursery or a suitable place for the sewing-machine, and fits the family and the furniture around these central spots. Or a little girl puts her doll house into the new play-room, and already it is a playroom, even before the bookcase and the rocking horse and the other odds and ends gather about it.

It was on the very verge of being seven o'clock now, and the market people were hurry-scurrying this way and that, getting the fruits and vegetables unloaded from their wagons by Himself, and arranged in beautiful piles on the stalls by Herself. Alanna was busy and excited. She wished to arrange things in bands of color, like a rainbow, with a border of red cherries all around the edge, but Aunt Judy said there was no time for such fanciful doings, and the marketers due any minute now. So Alanna worked off her surplus energy by running up and down the market's aisles. The meats were all in the broad aisle that ran down the middle of the sheds, and the fruits, vegetables, butter and eggs, sugar buns, yellow taffy and such were in the narrower side aisles. Everybody was passing the time o' day with everybody else, and an odd few children, that couldn't be left at home, were forever getting underfoot and being knocked down. Little they minded that . . . it was all in the day's play!

A little while and the buyers began to come. There were boarding-house keepers with anxious faces and fine ladies with placid faces and poor folks with pinched faces—all kinds. Some carried their own baskets, others brought an unwilling chauffeur into the market, a basket on his arm. Before eleven

o'clock Aunt Judy had sold every box of cherries. Alanna thought that by mid-afternoon many houses in Baltimore would smell like cherry pie. Alanna's share of the work was to wrap up the purchases and hand them to the chauffeurs. More than one of these young lads in neat livery was an Irish lad, who, recognizing in Alanna a fellow citizen of the Old Country, would tip his cap and say, "The top of the morning to you, Miss." And Alanna, her smile widening, would nod gaily and make the proper reply to that genial salutation—"Thank you kindly, sir, and the rest of the day to yourself!"

At twelve o'clock Aunt Judy gave Uncle Peter a knowing look and said, "Peter, Alanna and myself will be knockin' off a bit. Do you mind the stall till we come back again."

"I will that!" said Uncle Peter. "And don't be pinchin' any at all. Spread yourself, woman."

"I will that!" said Aunt Judy, and emptied the till—an old tobacco box—into her capacious, old-fashioned pocket. She left the market with Alanna, walked down Lexington Street to where it reached its lowest point before it began to climb up to Charles Street, and there, on the corner, entered a department store. Alanna's curiosity fairly shot out of her eyes. What was Aunt Judy going to buy in this wonderful store? Swifter than any ship her thoughts crossed the ocean and arrived at the little town she knew so well and the little shop there where she had bought her clothes to travel with. For the first time in her life Alanna thought, "'Tis a quare little town. Small it is, and I never knew it before!" But there was nothing either queer or small in the way she loved it.

By this time they had mounted a stairway and come to a room where pretty cotton dresses hung on hangers in a long

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row, some gingham, some percale, some with two gay pockets, all ravishingly beautiful in Alanna's eyes.

"Alanna," said Aunt Judy, "you've been a good girl. I'm going to buy you a new dress, and you may have your choice of these—if I like it too."

Alanna's face grew grave, and her eyes lost that look of curiosity and became filled with a look of shame. Away flew her thoughts (they were great flyers!) to that dress hanging on a hook in her room at Honeysuckle Farm—that dress with one pocket sewed up tight. Her lips trembled, tears began tumbling in two cataracts down her cheeks, and she had to stem the downpour with her sleeve.

"Whatever is the matter, Alanna?" cried Aunt Judy in astonishment. "'Deed now, darlin', you can have your choice whether I like it or not."

Alanna choked back any further cataracts that might be ready to come, and said, "Oh, no, Aunt Judy, it isn't that at all, it's something else." Very quickly she turned her attention to the making of a choice. Very humbly she chose one that had no pockets; very humbly thanked Aunt Judy; very humbly took the parcel when the dress had been wrapped; and left the store in the wake of Aunt Judy with a heavier burden than ever on her heart. "Saints help me!" she thought, "how can I ever pray again, and me so wicked and Aunt Judy so kind to me!"

Alanna was very anxious to earn money, so that she might send some home to her mother. But Uncle Peter had said that she must wait until they moved to the city for that. He had already sold the farm and bought the house on Biddle Street, but could not get into the latter until the first of No-

vember. Then, said Uncle Peter, she might get a job and earn money.

When Aunt Judy and Alanna got back to the market house they all three sat behind the stall and ate the lunch they had brought in a basket from home, together with three cups of hot tea that Uncle Peter fetched from a little restaurant near by. Thus refreshed, there being a lull in business, Alanna walked about the market seeing what there was to see. Not far off she came upon Rose Parsons, whom she hailed with delight, and who went about with her, introducing her to many of the market people, and even to the big, broad-shouldered policeman who had the market sheds on his "beat." Dan Coogan, or Big Dan, as he was called, had bristling red hair and fierce blue eyes that gave no indication of the warm heart, that beat behind his blue coat. He had a way of twisting his club so rapidly around that it looked like a solid shield in his hand, and he said "Avast heaving!" in a great roar whenever there was a disturbance in the market. As nobody knew what it meant, it sounded quite terrible.

Around and around, and up and down, Rose and Alanna went, until they had visited every shed and seen every kind of merchandise, from scaly fish to cinnamon buns. It was while they were looking at the latter and talking to the rosy-cheeked Gretchen Conrad, who was keeping the flies from the buns with a fly-swatter as she talked, that they heard two prolonged shrieks that struck familiarly upon Alanna's ears. Twin shrieks they were. Alanna knew they came from twin mouths. She felt sure that nobody but the Imp and the Angel could have made such long-drawn-out shrieks on a single breath. Instantly she dashed into the meat aisle whence the sounds came,

and there was Dan Coogan holding the Imp and the Angel each by an arm. Their eyes were shut tight in order to leave more space on their faces for those wide-open mouths.

"Let those children be!" cried Alanna on a high note above the din the twins were making. She seized an arm of Big Dan and began to pound on it. Dan shook her off as though she were a mere gnat buzzing about him. The children stopped screaming to look at Alanna. For a moment there was a surprised silence. Big Dan looked down at the twins and laughed.

"What corked ye up so suddenly?" he asked.

"'Cause we aren't lost any more," said the Angel.

"So what's the use?" said the Imp. "We don't waste tears."

"Where is your mother?" asked Alanna.

"We don't know," said the twins in a breath, "but you can find her."

"See here," said Big Dan to Alanna, "I can't wait around here all day. Will you see that these children get to their mother?"

"Sure!" said Alanna, and with each child by a hand and Rose following, she led the way around the market, and finally found Mrs. Webster buying butter and eggs from a lively old woman who threw in a joke with each egg.

"Where have you been?" asked Mrs. Webster of the twins. "I thought I missed you in the fish market. Why, Alanna Malone, is that you? I'm glad to see you, my dear. Children, would you like to have Alanna spend Sunday with us?"

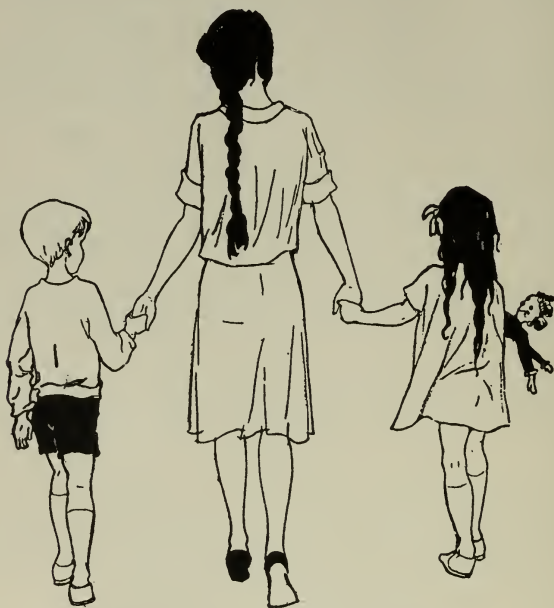
The twins' approval of this suggestion was unanimous.

"Very well, then, if Alanna's aunt can spare her, Mademoiselle and you children may come here Saturday afternoon

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and get her, and we'll take her back to the farm on Sunday afternoon." With a few words more they left, and Alanna hastened back to tell Aunt Judy of the invitation.

It was on the evening of the next day, just after supper, that Alanna asked Uncle Peter where he had been all afternoon.



ALANNA WITH THE IMP AND THE ANGEL

"I looked for you everywhere about the place, Uncle Peter, and you weren't anywhere."

"Oh, yes," said Uncle Peter, "I was somewhere."

"I didn't see you there," said Alanna.

"Well, I kept dodging about," said Uncle Peter.

"I even went over to the scarecrows' house," went on Alanna,

"and Mrs. Jake had a newspaper and was pretending she could read."

"You're getting warm," said Uncle Peter.

"It's a warm day," said Alanna. "And I told Mrs. Jake I would read aloud to her if I could find a book. Have you and Aunt Judy got a book anywhere, Uncle Peter?"


"You're getting hot," said Uncle Peter.

"It's a hot day," said Alanna, and couldn't see why Uncle Peter laughed at her.

"Alanna doesn't know all the fancy ways of American talk yet," said Aunt Judy. "Run upstairs, Alanna darlin', and you'll see what Uncle Peter has been doing this afternoon. Away to the city he went, to the second-hand bookstore on Howard Street, and he picking you out a few tasty—"

"Sh-h-h-h!" said Uncle Peter.

Alanna sped up the stairway on feet that skipped every other stair, her heart thumping. Had Uncle Peter discovered her sewed-up pocket? Arriving in her room she made a dash for the blue dress on its hook. Praise be! The pocket was still sewed up tight. Looking around the room she spied instantly a small bookshelf on one side of the window, that had not been there before, and on it in a row stood four books. Alanna stood staring at them.



Chapter Thirteen

Old and worn books they were, and one without a cover. They seemed too old to stand up straight, but leaned wearily against each other. Alanna gazed at them, her eyes blinking with excitement. There was something very exciting about becoming the possessor of four books at once. Never had she had one of her own before, for her school books had belonged to the school. She recalled the yellow-covered readers, the brown spelling book, the geography with the world floating about in clouds on the cover, the grammar with its terrible sentences that had to be parsed, the arithmetic that got so dirty from the tears she shed over it, the history of her own country that she knew by heart long before the end of the year. And there was her mother with only one book, and Tim Riley with only one, and herself now—good gracious, can she believe it? --with no less than four.

She began at the left and looked at them one by one, handling them as though they might break if she were not very careful. The first was a dictionary, and the maker of it seemed to be Samuel Johnson (whoever he was). Well, she knew all about a dictionary, how to use it and everything. Many's the time Miss McGrennigan sent her to the school dictionary to look up a word and read it out to the school. Well, she would hunt for a word right now. A hard one. She took down the dic-

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tionary and hunted on the time-stained pages for "automobile." Believe it or not, as you like, it wasn't there! Next she hunted for "telephone." And bless you, that wasn't there either! Did you ever hear the likes of that!

"'Tis a quare kind of a dictionary," said Alanna, and set it back upon the shelf.

The second book had a gay red cover, rather spotted, and in dull gilt letters that once, no doubt, had been bright, was the title, *Alice in Wonderland*. This book was new to Alanna. She opened it and looked at the pictures. Here was a girl with a neck like a giraffe's; here was a rabbit in little coat and trousers, looking at a watch; and here was a caterpillar sitting on a toadstool, smoking something that might or might not be a pipe.

"Quare pictures!" said Alanna.

The third had no cover, but seemed to be about Joan of Arc. Oh, yes, Alanna had read a story about Joan of Arc in her reader one year—all about her seeing visions and becoming a soldier and being burnt to death. Alanna seated herself at the window with the book to see if it told any more than she already knew about Joan. The daylight was still quite bright, and Alanna, plunging into the story as a diver plunges into the sea, was lost beneath the waves. She was herself the young Joan; she was herself tending sheep; helping her mother with the work; playing with her brothers and her friend and playmate Mengette; seeing the visions and hearing the voices of saints; riding off, so young and fearless, in her armor; enduring hardships, imprisonment, insults, fiery death. Alanna's whole soul was lifted up out of her everyday life into another life more courageous and more thrilling.

Slowly the light began to fade; swiftly Alanna read. She would have liked to know who wrote this wonderful book, but both cover and title page were gone. No matter. In plunged Alanna once more. She seemed to see the simple home of Joan's parents; the church close by, surrounded by its little cemetery; the small village of Domremy; the placid river flowing through green meadows, with alder and willow thickets along its banks; the sheep huddled about Joan as she knit a stocking of gray wool; the cattle coming to be milked; the simple, brave young heart listening to the Voices and altering her life in obedience to their words.

"It's a saint she is," said Alanna to herself. Then, hearing Aunt Judy's voice calling her, she closed the book, laid it carefully upon the shelf, and ran down to thank Uncle Peter for his gift. She had forgotten all about the fourth book!

The following morning—it was Thursday on the calendar—when the work was done, Alanna, with Aunt Judy's permission, went to the log cabin to read to Mrs. Jake, who was still not very well. Under her arm was the dictionary. It was her intention to read it to Mrs. Jake from A to Z. There are plenty of interesting things in the dictionary, Alanna argued, and if you read it all you won't miss any of them. Reaching the cabin, she found that no further attempt had been made to cover up the windows, and the warm summer air was entering unhindered into the freshly whitewashed room.

Mrs. Jake was lying on the bed. Alanna sat down on the one chair and began to read. She read very clearly and distinctly, as Miss McGrennigan had taught her to do, and came down with heavy emphasis on the longest word in each sentence, which was her own idea. She had read less than three

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columns of words beginning with A, when Mrs. Jake became restless.

"Miss Lanny, honey, I doan seem to git no sense outen dat readin', nohow. Aint you-all got no pretty po'try you could read? I favor po'try consid-rable."

"No, I haven't," said Alanna, "but I'll recite you the story of Joan of Arc. Would you like that?"

"Who dat, Miss Lanny?"

"Listen!" said Alanna. She laid down the dictionary, rose up, and before the old colored woman's delighted eyes she went through that story of obedience and courage, living it, acting it, as though she were upon a stage—no, as though she were upon the meadows of Domremy, before the portal of the great Cathedral of Rheims, amidst the burning faggots in Rouen. Alanna became more and more thrilled as she went on. In the prison scene she uttered groans; in the trial scene she defended herself before the judges in vivid Irish phrases. And when she was burning upon the pyre she screamed so lustily with pain and terror and shed such real tears that Mrs. Jake's eyes rolled in her head and she was almost pale with fright.

When Alanna finished, slipping out of the soul of Joan of Arc and back into the soul of Alanna of Ballycooly, she found that soul of hers biggened by the experience. She felt warmed and thrilled. She almost felt that it would be easy to be good. Not quite. Coming to herself she looked about her. There on her bed lay Mrs. Jake looking like a trembling old ghost that had forgotten to "disappear."

Alanna laughed a bluebell peal. "Sure, I've been thinking

I was Joan myself!" she said gaily. And then added soberly, "And she a saint and myself a sinner."

On Saturday Uncle Peter, Aunt Judy, and Alanna went to market again, Tuesday and Saturday being the market days at the Lexington Market. There are other markets in Baltimore, the Richmond Market, for example. The cars that come along Linden Avenue give a great curve—two curves, indeed—when they get to Biddle Street, and roll right around the end of Richmond Market into Howard Street, and if you are riding in a car on a winter afternoon along towards half-past four you see the lights begin to twinkle up over the stalls, and the last few customers hurrying about with their baskets, while the market people stamp their feet to keep them warm, and wish five o'clock would hurry up and come, so they might close up and get away home.

Well, here were Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy and Alanna once more at the market having a busy day and selling their stuff like hot cakes, with Nags blowing the oats about in his nose-bag, chewing and breathing all at once, when presently along came Mademoiselle and the twins to get Alanna and take her home with them. Alanna had brought her new dress along, but had worn her old dress, since it is not easy to keep spotlessly clean at market. But now here they were and she hadn't changed her dress.

"What shall I do, Aunt Judy?" she asked.

"Scrooge down under the stall and change it," said Aunt Judy.

So Alanna scrooged down in faded pink, was out of sight a while, and came up in fresh blue, and went gaily off with Mademoiselle and the twins.

ALANNA

The car dodged in and out among the streets as though it were a fox and the hounds were after it. Odd streets they were, thought Alanna, as though you were to clap the houses of Ballycoolly together into a row, and then have hundreds and thousands and millions of such rows running this way and that, as far as your eye could see. All of them (nearly) were of red brick, and all of them (nearly) had white marble steps. Alanna, reflecting on how very many people had died out of the world, concluded that the many mansions in Heaven would really have to be arranged in tight rows, like the houses in Baltimore, or space would certainly give out.

When at last they reached the home of the Websters, however, it proved to be one of an earlier generation that had been somehow overlooked by the people that tear down old houses and put up new ones in the blink of an eye. It was a low frame house, white with green shutters, and it had a huge red brick chimney running up one end on the outside. All around it was a small lawn, whose paths were bordered by box hedges. The whole place was like a small green and white island in the midst of a red brick sea. In the doorway stood an old man, tall and straight, with white hair and placid, kindly face. You might have thought that he had been marooned on this island years ago and had never escaped—so much did he seem a part of it.

Mrs. Webster introduced Alanna to the old man by saying, "Alanna, this is Grandfather Chester." The twins made a further introduction by saying, "He's our Quaker grandfather, and tomorrow he is going to take us to Meeting, and if you don't sit still you get punished."

What all this meant Alanna did not know. "Meeting"

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meant nothing to her. But during the afternoon, when the novelty of having Alanna had worn off, as far as the twins were concerned, Grandfather Chester took her to the library and showed her some books. Alanna opened up her heart to him and told him about her four books, and how one was a diction-



GRANDFATHER CHESTER

ary, one (she thought) a book of magic, and one was the story of Joan of Arc. Here Alanna bubbled out her delight in the wonderful Joan.

Grandfather listened attentively, and then he asked, "But what was the fourth book, Alanna?"

"I don't know; I forgot to look," said Alanna.

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"Aha! There's a mystery for thee!" said Grandfather in his Quaker speech, which sounded strange to Alanna. "I'll wager thee can't refrain from looking at it tomorrow night before thee goes to bed."

"Well, now I won't," laughed Alanna, "just because you said I would!"

"We'll see!" said Grandfather, wagging his head.

"Yes, we will!" said Alanna, wagging hers.

At this moment the twins tumbled into the library, exclaiming that they were tired of being twins, or at least, tired of being Peter and Brian, and wouldn't Alanna please give them some other names.

"Brian and Peter are the only twins I really *know*," said Alanna, "but I think I've heard of some others . . . what's this now their names are? . . . let me see . . . I heard Father Ryan tell about them . . ." (All these dots represent Alanna groping about in her mind for a couple of names) . . . "Och, to be sure! They were Dan and Beersheba!"

Grandfather burst into a roar of laughter, but the twins fell promptly into a fight. Each wanted to be Beersheba. They went off disputing.

Grandfather, being a gentleman, apologized to Alanna for laughing at her, and explained to her that Dan and Beersheba were not twins but towns.

"Well, you can't always tell," said Alanna, and laughed at her own mistake.

That night when Alanna went up to her bedroom, a little room next to Mademoiselle's, she was not at all sleepy. She went along the hall to Mademoiselle's room, and seeing a light through the keyhole, knocked.

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"Entrez!" said Mademoiselle's voice.

Alanna had no idea what "entrez" meant, but she went in, anyway.

"Mademoiselle, I feel like talking," said Alanna.

"Oui?" said Mademoiselle brightly.

"Don't you, too?" asked Alanna.

After a pause Mademoiselle said "oui" again, a little dubiously, and yawned with wide-opened mouth, the way a kitten does.

"Mademoiselle, did you ever hear of Joan of Arc?"

Mademoiselle was instantly wide awake. "Ah, oui!" she said. "But we call her Jeanne d'Arc."

"What do you know about her?" asked Alanna, and at that Mademoiselle poured out a mixture of French and English that Alanna could only half understand. With smiles, with shrugs, with groans, she repeated the performance that Alanna had made before Mrs. Jake, but "raised to the tenth power." If Alanna had trouble with the words, she had none with the gestures. She understood those perfectly.

"Praise be, Mademoiselle, you cry just the way we Irish do!" she said, and considered that she had paid Mademoiselle a very high compliment. Then Mademoiselle kissed Alanna French-fashion, on both cheeks. And Alanna understood that, too.

The next morning Grandfather Chester took Alanna, Barbara, and Dale (do you recognize the twins under their proper names?) to the Quaker Meeting. Not the old Meeting House, that stood like a little gray basilica on a corner of Monument Street for so many years, but the new one, up in the north end of the city, where the beautiful old Colonial buildings of the

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University are. Indeed, it looks as though it might be one of them, so like them is it on a more modest scale. Grandfather took Alanna and the twins inside, led them to a seat, and himself went and sat on one of the two rows of seats that are raised a bit, and face all the others.

Alanna, sitting with a twin on each side of her, waited for something to happen, but for a long time nothing happened. In all her life Alanna had never known such quiet, deep and still. In the church at home there was music, and pictures and statues of the Holy Family and the saints, and in the beautiful gray stone Cathedral right here in Baltimore she had seen one Sunday these things, and stained glass in the windows besides. Here there were only sober colors and simple benches. So to her it was in no sense church at all. Alanna hardly knew what to be looking at while all this silence was going on. Well, there was nothing at all to look at, unless you looked at the row of men and women on the lifted benches where Grandfather Chester sat.

To her astonishment the twins sat very still. Dale had folded his arms and was looking as much like all men in general and Grandfather in particular as he possibly could. Barbara had a Japanese fan, and was tracing with her forefinger the figures of two lovely Japanese ladies who, with combs and mirrors, were arranging their wonderful coiffures. As her busy finger traced, her busy mind wove a story about them.

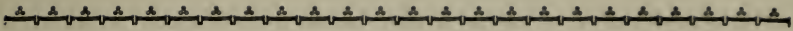
Presently Alanna heard a slight rustle, and there was Grandfather Chester standing up. Very gravely he began to speak. Very earnestly Alanna listened to him. And suddenly it seemed to her that he was speaking directly to her. What was he saying? Alas, he was saying that the truth makes us

free, but a lie binds us as with fetters. More than that, he said that there were lies of all degrees of harmfulness, and that the very worst kind was never spoken in any language whatever. It was crueler than speech. By this time Alanna's heart was beating painfully, but she clenched her hands and compelled herself to listen. Silence when one should speak, said Grandfather Chester, was the lie of lies. And at that, very suddenly, Alanna rose up trembling, pushed her way past the astonished Barbara, knocking the fan and its lovely ladies from her hand, and swiftly left the Meeting House.

Grandfather Chester, startled and alarmed, could not go on with his sermon, but before he sat down he beckoned to him a boy of seventeen who sat near the front and said to him, "John Watkins, will thee kindly go after the little girl and fetch her back, or take her to Mrs. Webster's home? She is a stranger in Baltimore, and may get lost."

John Watkins nodded, and went at once after Alanna. Grandfather Chester was very much disturbed. But he sat quiet, his eyes closed, wondering what had happened to the little Irish girl, who had been listening to him so intently, with her big eyes fixed unblinkingly upon him. When the Meeting was over he went quickly home with the twins. Dale and Barbara, you may be sure, were round-eyed with curiosity about Alanna, but when those two were in Meeting with Grandfather, they were still. They did not dare be anything else in that big silence. You can shuffle about quite a bit when music is going on, but here you hardly dare blink lest the noise of your eyelashes clashing together should make a disturbance.

Meanwhile, what of Alanna?



Chapter Fourteen

Alanna had hurried out of the Meeting House into the street and had turned south. Her idea was to get to the Lexington Market, and maybe there she might find Big Dan and ask him how to reach the Green Spring Valley Road. Once on that road she had but to keep on it and she would sooner or later—probably considerably later—be at Honeysuckle Farm. So she sped along at a rapid pace, seeing many miles before her, looking neither to the right nor to the left. The street was fairly empty at this church hour, and she went along briskly. At first her mind was quite empty, but before long she was asking herself why she was running away. Before she could answer her own question she heard rapid footsteps behind her, and in a moment a strong hand had gripped her arm. A man had seized her!

Alanna let out a good round Irish screech, such as a screech-owl himself would envy. She had heard often enough of hold-ups and bandits in this terrible America, and of how bandits thought nothing of shooting people in broad daylight in busy streets. To be sure most of the bandits seemed to be in Chicago, a city a million miles (was it?) to the west. But here was one right now holding her up. Fortunately Alanna knew what to do, for Uncle Peter had told her. “Just

heave up both your hands as high as they'll go, Alanna, and then maybe there's a chance he won't shoot you."

One of Alanna's arms was in that strong grip, but she heaved up the other arm, and, by way of good measure, shut her eyes tight and prayed to Saint Joan of Arc to spoil the bandit's pistol so it wouldn't work.

The bandit broke into merry laughter.

Alanna opened her eyes in astonishment and met the laughing gaze of a pair of entirely friendly eyes.

"I can't let go of you, you know, because you'd get away."

"Sure I would," said Alanna. "I haven't got any money—not a penny. Och, why did I ever leave Ballycooly!" Then, shutting her eyes again she asked in a husky, frightened voice, "Are you going to shoot?"

"Shoot!" cried the bandit. "Why, what do you think I am?"

"A—a villain," said Alanna. And then the bandit laughed again, and his laugh was so infectious that Alanna laughed with him.

"What are you, then?" asked Alanna.

"I'm a friend of Mr. Chester's," said John Watkins, "and he was afraid you'd get lost. Don't you want to come back to the Meeting House and go home to Mrs. Webster's with him and the twins?"

"Not I," said Alanna. "I'm going home to my uncle's house."

"All right," said John, "I'll take you there."

Alanna turned her eyes gravely on John, looked him over, and trusted him—well, not entirely!—in spite of herself. "It's a long way out the Green Spring Valley Road, is Honeysuckle Farm," she said.

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"We'll go back and get my father's car," said John.

Alanna became distrustful. He might be a kidnapper. Uncle Peter said that in America you had to keep your eyes open. "Not we," she said firmly, "we'll walk."

"All right," said John. "I suppose you ladies must always have your way. But first I must phone to the Webster house that you are safe, and then we'll start. I'm a good hiker. By the way, I don't know your name."

Alanna's suspicions bobbed up their heads again. What did he be wanting to know her name for? Kidnappers, Uncle Peter said, always wanted to know who your people were so they could demand a ransom. She must be cautious.

"Joan of Arc," she answered gravely, hoping the real Joan wouldn't mind. "What's your name?"

"Christopher Columbus," said John solemnly.

Alanna went with him to a drug store and listened carefully at the crack of the telephone booth door. She heard him say, "Hello, is that you, Susan?" (Susan was the Websters' cook.) "Well, please tell Mr. Chester when he gets home that I am taking his young friend to her uncle's home, and will he please have somebody come for me in a car. We're hiking."

When they went out into the street again Alanna said, "I guess you're not a kidnapper, are you?"

"No," said John, "I've never been engaged in that business. I'm only just finishing high school. Kidnapping comes much later. There's the University to be got through first, you know."

"Well," said Alanna, "my name is really Alanna Malone."

"And mine's John Watkins," said John, "but the fellows call me Watty at the High."

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John wanted to take a short cut to the Green Spring Valley Road, but here Alanna was firm. Uncle Peter had said, "Don't let anybody fool you." Well, she wouldn't. So they must needs go down to the Lexington Market first. Alanna thought she would perhaps know the way from there. And so they trudged along due south. The morning was warm, but fine, with a pleasant breeze blowing. By the time they reached the market house, which looked forlornly empty and dead, John knew almost everything there was to be known about Ballycooly, from Granddaddy Tracy to the littlest McCann, and Alanna knew all about the "High" from the Principal to the Lacrosse team. Two miles out on the Green Spring Valley Road John asked Alanna why she had run off from the Meeting, and Alanna answered, "Because."

Four miles out he asked her again and she said, "Because Grandfather Chester preached at me."

A mile more and she said, "Well, the truth is, if you must know, I am telling the worst lie that ever was, and I've been telling it ever since I reached America."

"Why don't you stop telling it?" suggested John.

"Because," said Alanna.

A mile more, and Alanna told him the whole story while they sat and rested by the roadside.

"That's no kind of a burden to be carrying around on your mind," said John. "I wonder the money hasn't burned a hole in that pocket and dropped out."

"It has burned a hole in my heart," said Alanna, "and if Father Ryan was to rise up out of the dust of the road at me, I couldn't look him in the face, and he telling me the last time I saw him to be courageous and truthful."

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"Well, of course he might rise up out of the dust of the road any minute," said John with a laugh, "and my advice to you, Alanna, is to heave off the load and feel like a free man. I used to tell lies occasionally myself when I was young like you."

"I'm rising for fifteen myself," said Alanna mournfully, "but it would be terrible if suddenly I wanted to go home and didn't have the money."

"Well, won't you be earning some when your uncle moves to town?"

"But I want to send my earnings to my mother."

By this time they were walking along again, and now were nearly at Honeysuckle Farm. There was the orchard, and back of that a tiny curl of smoke indicated that Jake and Mrs. Jake were getting dinner. Nearer and nearer they came, and at last they saw Uncle Peter leaning upon the front gate smoking his old corncob pipe. When he saw them he took the pipe from his mouth and waved it at them.

"Uncle Peter," said Alanna when they reached the gate, "this is Mr. John Watkins."

Uncle Peter held out a horny hand and shook hands with John.

"If I knew your last name, Uncle Peter, I would call you by it," said John.

"Sheridan, sir, is my name."

"Thank you, sir. I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Sheridan."

"But Uncle Peter comes handier, and I'm used to it."

"Thank you, Uncle Peter. And John comes handier to me."

"John it is, then. John, I'm glad to see you."

While all these polite speeches were passing back and forth

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between Uncle Peter and John, Alanna's forehead was all crinkled up with anxious thought. She sneaked around to the further side of Uncle Peter, nudged him, and whispered, "Uncle Peter, do you think I dare ask Aunt Judy to invite John to dinner?"

"Sure!" whispered back Uncle Peter. "Run right in and ask her. And oh, Alanna!" he called after her as she ran to the house, "a letter came for you yesterday. From Ireland it is!"

Alanna sped on and into the house. Aunt Judy was putting a huge blackberry pie on the table. She looked up and was astonished to see Alanna.

"Bless me, child!" she said. "I wasn't expecting you till late."

"I wasn't expecting myself," said Alanna. "Aunt Judy, I've brought a man home—or a boy, anyways—or rather he brought me home, or anyways we came together, and it was a very long walk, and we're tired and hungry, and Aunt Judy, could I be inviting him to dinner?"

"You could," said Aunt Judy. "I'll say it as shouldn't that it's a good dinner, that a king on his throne would be pleased with."

Alanna and Aunt Judy went about briskly, adding two places to the table and putting on what fancy touches they could, as we all do when an unexpected guest arrives, and in fifteen minutes the four of them were sitting down to a good but simple meal, of which the blackberry pie was the crowning glory.

It was when the pie was being cut that John Watkins, looking across the table at Alanna half-laughingly, half-seriously, said suddenly, "Alanna, why don't you go upstairs and get

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you-know-what and give it to your aunt? You'll enjoy the pie much better if you do."

Alanna gasped, paled a little, and "took the dare." Up she jumped and went upstairs, half-pleased at the thought of having this thing off her mind, half-frightened at what Aunt Judy might say. She took down the blue dress, laid it upon the bed, and with a pair of scissors that Aunt Judy had given her, cut the stitches that kept the pocket closed. Eagerly she put her hand into the pocket.

The money was gone!

Turning the pocket inside out didn't do a bit of good. Searching in the other pocket, hunting all over the room, rummaging among her other clothes—all these things failed to bring the money to light. Dazed, she went slowly downstairs. When she entered the dining room her eyes were so big and her face so pale that Uncle Peter cried, "Alanna my dear, do you feel ill?"

Alanna looked at Aunt Judy. On Aunt Judy's face there was a very curious expression. Alanna sat down in her chair and pushed away from her that beautiful piece of pie (it was pie-by-six, if you want to know its size) with the dark red juice oozing from it. John looked puzzled.

"Lost something?" asked Aunt Judy.

"I've lost your money, Aunt Judy," said Alanna, with trembling lip.

"I guessed it was mine," said Aunt Judy.

"But you didn't know about it!" exclaimed Alanna.

"Didn't I just!" said Aunt Judy. "I saw that pocket all sewed up before you'd been here a week. I just thought I'd have a look. And when I saw what it was, sure it was easy

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as easy to guess how you came to have it, and says I to myself, that money had best be in bank, drawing interest, and that's where it is."

Aunt Judy rose and went to the kitchen cupboard and pulled a tin cracker box from the top shelf. From this she drew a bank book, which she handed to Alanna. It had Alanna's name on it.

"But, Aunt Judy, that money isn't mine," said Alanna.

"It is now," said Aunt Judy, "and the longer you leave it be, the more it will become."

Perhaps we'd better skip the next scene, in which Alanna wept on Aunt Judy's bosom, Uncle Peter patted her on the back for fear she'd choke, and John Watkins insisted that Alanna should thank him for getting the money off her mind and into the bank, which could stand the strain so much better. After that they finished the pie (John had three pieces), and while Aunt Judy and Alanna washed the dishes, Uncle Peter told John all about farming from oats to potato-bugs, and John told Uncle Peter all about the various games of lacrosse between the various Baltimore Highs from victory to defeat—and how to take the latter, which isn't easy. At half past four Grandfather Chester and the twins came in the car, Grandfather made his peace with Alanna (which was easy), the twins went over the farm with delighted interest (offering in vain to buy Crusoe), and finally they left, taking John Watkins with them.

Said Uncle Peter then, "Have you read your letter, Alanna?"

Letter? She had forgotten all about it, and when he gave it to her she opened it with a pang at her forgetfulness. It was from Larry, and the writing showed very plainly that he had

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labored hard over it. There were several misspelled words, and four blots. None of these things bothered Alanna in the least. Larry began by plunging right into the news, quite omitting to say that they were all well and hoped Alanna was the same. If you are a twelve-year-old boy and have to stick your tongue out and curl it around while you write each word, you do not waste time over sentences of mere politeness. He reported that Black Molly had a calf; that he had caught a white owl and was taming it; that now he was cutting peat and could do it as well as the bigger boys; that Johnny Kinsella had gone to London and was chauffeur for a doctor there; that little Pat was the troublesome little gossoon for running away and getting lost with the whole of Ballycooly looking for him in pigpens and down the wells; that Stacey Fitzgerald came down to see his mother and was as "prittie as a picshure"; that it was lonesome in the evenings without Alanna, but that in the daytime they never thought of her at all by reason of being so busy; and that he was her loving brother and would she send him some American stamps. A postscript said "Mother says she is well and fine and maybe she is I don't know."

When Alanna went up to bed that night her heart was as light as thistledown. Nevermore would the sewed-up pocket weigh upon her. Never again would she believe that Aunt Judy wished to keep her against her will. She knelt down by her window and prayed the happiest kind of a prayer, in which she promised to be as much like Joan of Arc as one could be without going to war and dying at the stake. Jumping up from her knees, too happy to go to sleep at once, she went over to her bookcase. She pulled down the fourth book.

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It was a *Life of Abraham Lincoln*. "Who was he at all?" Alanna asked herself. "Well now, if I haven't looked at it after all, and didn't Grandfather Chester say I would and didn't I say I wouldn't! Well, I'll not read it, anyway. Sure I won't!"

However, she carried it over to the window, where there was still a bit of waning light, and before she knew it she was reading about the simplest kind of home—a mere handful of walls and a fireplace—that might be Ballycooly itself. Alanna in her mind's eye could see the boy Abe sitting by the Malone hearth, or lying at length on the uneven earthen floor while he read his book by the light of a bit of candle. "Just like us," said Alanna, closing the book when twilight deepened into night, and was up next morning before the sun to read and read before she dressed.

So the summer crept along, and Alanna, with plenty of good food, was no longer thin; and with her work in the open air, tending garden patches and gathering vegetables and fruits, grew rosy and strong. There was nothing that she was not ready and willing to turn her hand to, from waiting on the stall at market to putting up jams and pickles in the kitchen. She had hung up the little booklet on baking powder on the kitchen wall, and more than once had made a cake or a pudding from its recipes. "When I go home I could be useful to my mother," ran her thoughts, "only that at home there's never much of anything to go with the baking powder. Musha me! how little we do be having at home." And again she would think, when beating up eggs for a cake, "It's a quare little place is Ballycooly—and me not knowing that till I

came away!" And last of all, warmly, "But and indeed one pitatie over there is worth the full of a pot of them over here, they're that tasty in Ballycooly!"

August came and went, lining the Green Spring Valley Road with goldenrod and purple asters, and filling the wooded places with huckleberries. These Alanna picked and sold at market as long as they lasted, and Uncle Peter saying the money was her own, she sent it joyfully to her mother. There was but little news from home, but she did not mind that, knowing the Ballycooly remissness in regard to answering letters. She saw Rose Parsons almost every day. Once Rose took her to a country party at a nearby farmhouse; and once John Watkins took Mademoiselle and the twins and Alanna to a game of lacrosse between two Baltimore Highs.

October came, and never had it come more gloriously. The sumac and the dogwood, the briers and vines, were scarlet; the oaks were dark red; the maples, sycamores, and poplars were yellow; the beeches were brown. Every tree, indeed, except the evergreens, took on a flaming, or a golden, or a russet color until one's heart ached as it swelled at all the loveliness. Uncle Peter banked up his celery rows and gathered in the limas and got everything in shipshape on the farm in readiness for leaving it in early November. Aunt Judy wept a bit at the prospect of leaving her home of many years, and Alanna wept with her. Alanna loved Honeysuckle Farm.

The day before they left, when the house was a clutter of barrels and boxes and ancient trunks, and the furniture was huddled together with that desolate air furniture has when it is being either housecleaned or moved, Alanna went over to bid

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Mrs. Jake good-by. Mrs. Jake was better now, but was very low spirited at the thought of their departure, and in particular at losing Alanna.

"Honey," she said, "I dunno how come I'se gotten so fond of anybody the way I has wid you-all. My heart's most broke, chile, to see you a-goin' away. You's sure got nice pleasant ways, Miss Lanny, honey. I don't see how your own mammy gits along widout you nohow. Could you say yo' little piece to me again dis mawnin' befo' you go?"

"Do you mean the piece about Joan of Arc, Mrs. Jake?"

"Effen she's de lady what got burnt up, yas'm."

"I have a new piece, Mrs. Jake. Maybe you'll like it better. It's about a boy that had a very hard time."

"I likes 'em best when dey has a easy time, me."

"Well, but this one became a great man after a while."

"Well, dey ain't no harm in dat."

"His name was Abraham Lincoln . . ."

Up from the bed shot Mrs. Jake, her eyes shining. "Lawtsy, chile, he's de greates' saint dis yer country ebber done raise! You tell *me* about Ab'ham Linkum! You set right down dar an' I gwine tell *you-all* all about him!"

Alanna sat meekly down on the chair and became audience instead of actor, while Mrs. Jake, her movements rather stiff because of the "rheumatiz" in her joints, told the story of Abraham Lincoln as he appeared in the mind of one who long years ago had been a slave child. Great sweeping gestures her gaunt old arms made; great multitudes of black folk seemed to ring her around as she stood there; great tears rolled down her cheeks as she recalled the sorrows of her people. But

when she finished she was smiling again, and saying, "An' dat's Marse Linkum. An' when I gits to Heaben I'se gwine salute him lak he was a king wid a crown on hes haid!"

The old woman sank back on her bed, exhausted with her effort, and Alanna sat big-eyed on the rickety chair. After a while she rose up, said good-by to Mrs. Jake, and turned back at the door to say, "Well, there seem to be more kinds of saints than just one."


"Dey sho' is," said Mrs. Jake, "an' I bress de Lord dey was born on de airth an' we had 'em first. If dey was born in Heaben, Miss Lanny, dey wouldn't be no good to we-all nohow, not knowin' how we-all feel."

A week later Uncle Peter, Aunt Judy, and Alanna were settled in the Biddle Street house—or at least the furniture was settled there. It was a small house, sandwiched in between its neighbors on two sides so that there were only windows in front and at the rear. Behind the house was a dingy little yard of a few square feet, and behind that a dingy alley. In the front room downstairs was the shop with its big window, its shelves, its counter, and here Aunt Judy busied herself energetically. But Alanna was heart-broken and Uncle Peter was like a lost soul—whatever that may be.

Aunt Judy purchased the stock for the store and spent busy days getting it arranged upon the shelves—muslins, gingham, buttons, tape, ribbons, laces, and the like. The window, in particular, gave her much thought, and when it was arranged according to her taste, with loops of ribbon, with fancy handkerchiefs, and a few toys to catch childish eyes, she was much pleased. But when Alanna had hung her few clothes in the

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little back bedroom upstairs that looked out over the dingy yard, and Uncle Peter had put up a shelf for her, to hold her four books, why, what else was there for either of them to do? Nothing! And so one morning they slipped off and went down to see how the market was getting along without them.



Chapter Fifteen

*H*ow beautiful the market looked to them! How lovely the stalls, with their rainbow piles of cabbages, turnips, carrots, eggplant, pumpkins, celery, and great silver onions like huge pearls! How busy and eager the market people were! How satisfied the customers! And how proudly Big Dan whirled his club and went steppin' along like a soldier-laddy! Look at the meats in the middle aisle, how pink and fresh! And the fish, how silver-scaled! Look at the great sausages, coiled up in wooden tubs like hibernating snakes! Look at the mottled crabs, the worm-like shrimps, the buns speckled with currants, the taffy loaded with peanuts! Did you ever see a finer sight? Sure the riches of the world are here!

Uncle Peter and Alanna went to look at what had been, until a week or so ago, their own stall. It was now the stall of Mr. Vogeler, who, with his wife and his son Bud, was standing there as big as you please. It was they who had bought that loveliest, that best, that most longed-for place, Honey-suckle Farm. "Och!" said Uncle Peter, "I might better have cut the nose off my face and sold them that!"

Mrs. Vogeler, with a fancy white apron over her bright plaid dress, looked as pleased as could be sitting there selling *our* vegetables. Alanna casting a critical eye over the stall, saw that the carrots hadn't been properly washed and that the cab-

bages looked a little wilted, and had a great mind entirely to tell Mrs. Vogeler so, but Uncle Peter, suspecting her intention, hurried her along. As they passed the Parsons' stall Rose called to Alanna.

"Alanna, I know where you can get a job," she said, polishing off the purple sides of an eggplant till you would think it to be satin itself.

"Where, then?" asked Alanna eagerly. Alanna wanted something to do, so she wouldn't always be longing for the farm.

"At the Five-and-Ten-Cent Store right down here on Lexington Street, right-hand side," said Rose. "I saw a sign of 'Girl Wanted' in the window."

"Uncle Peter," begged Alanna, "let's go right away and get the job."

Uncle Peter scratched his head dubiously. "Sure, Alanna my dear, it's little I know about how to get a job, and me feeling like a sheep lost out of the pasture."

"Well, come with me, anyhow, please, Uncle Peter, and watch me get it."

At the Five-and-Ten nobody seemed to have any authority. There were two rows of neat and attractive girls with hair bobbed according to the latest—or maybe the next—fashion, all smiling and alert, but each handing on Uncle Peter and Alanna to the next, until they were at the back end of the store. Then, by good fortune, the door of a little caged-off room opened, and out came a woman with a sharp but worried face.

"Please, ma'am, I want the job," said Alanna promptly, before her courage should begin to ooze away.

The woman looked Alanna over. She saw a sturdy young frame, a bright though anxious young face, two grave eyes, a "countrified" costume, and two long braids of dark hair.

"From the country" was the woman's first thought; "raw material" was her second; "might be improved" was her third; but what she said was, "What experience have you had?"

"Sure I can do anything," said Alanna with a cheerful smile. "I can scrub, clean, whitewash, cook, take care of children, teach school, and sell vegetables!"

Two rows of girls began to giggle, but Mrs. Farron held up a silencing hand. "We don't do any of those things here," she said, and would have said more, but was interrupted by a tall, fair-haired girl who left her counter and joined the group.

"Mrs. Farron," said the girl, "I believe there's good stuff in her. I'll undertake to get her into shape. And until I do I think she won't do the toy department any harm."

"All right, Miss Andersen," said Mrs. Farron, with relief. Then, turning to Alanna, she said, "We'll give you a week's trial. Miss Andersen will take you in hand." And, with that, she went back to the cage.

Uncle Peter doesn't know to this day how he got out of the store. His heart was heavy. He felt as though he was deserting Alanna and leaving her in the camp of the enemy. He had become so fond of Alanna that sometimes he had a confused idea that she was really his own little Judy come to life again and grown up to nearly fifteen years of good-natured girlhood. So he shook his head sorrowfully as he took his way back to Biddle Street, and wished that he and Alanna were back at Honeysuckle Farm gathering in vegetables for

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the market. What job at all is there, he thought mournfully, can beat the farming job?

Miss Andersen, or, as the rest of the girls called her, Norwegian Jenny, was capable enough to run the entire world, if that were necessary, and so she had no trouble at all running Alanna. Fortunately Alanna's market experience had taught her to be quick at calculating in American money, and she no longer confused shillings and quarters. She knew that the dime was worth twice as much as the larger nickel, knew how much "two bits" was (though she wondered why there wasn't a "one bit"), and thought very little of the cent, that does be fallin' out of your hand and it so small, until she discovered that it had Abraham Lincoln's portrait on it.

Norwegian Jenny, in her very short dress, earrings, and tinted cheeks, was a bit scornful over Alanna's lack of experience—after all Alanna had boasted she could do!—and took her in hand sternly. However, she confessed that Alanna had her good points. In the first place, she attracted children, and wheedled them into buying tops and balls and "jacks" and toy trains that wouldn't run (and shouldn't be expected to for a dime), and little china dolls in tiny bathtubs, and flat, bright-colored picture books, and small wooden paint boxes whose paints seemed to have gone through the wash and come out faded. All these things the children bought from Alanna by reason of her friendly manner and the deep interest she took in each purchase.

"Och now, I wouldn't buy that if I were you. It will break on you before you get home, darlin'. Look-a-here, here's a little set of tin dishes that will make your dolls happy for weeks, and you dishing them up a nice, tasty little meal on

them. No, I can't change them for you if you don't like them when you get them home; 'tis not allowed. But I'll think up some other way you can use them . . . let me see now . . . for a store, maybe; or the plates would make fine little wheels for a cart, and you with a big brother to fix them on for you, and all."

Most of the girls laughed at Alanna, and even jeered at her before her face. But Alanna didn't mind very much. "Sure this is their own country," she said to herself, "and they know what way is best in it." And so she smiled at them, laughed at her own mistakes, and every day did a little better than she had done the day before.

When she received the first week's pay she gazed in astonishment at the money. It was like a fortune, or a miracle. She could hardly believe that it was her own. She was the last to leave the store that day, dismissing two children that had difficulty in selecting one toy only out of all that were on the counter, and the dime they finally handed to Alanna was so sticky that she had to wash it. At last, however, she was out on the street. As she turned from Lexington Street and walked north on Howard, Norwegian Jenny came out of a store and joined her. Jenny had just purchased a pair of silk stockings, and she must needs open the package and show them to Alanna.

"You ought to wear silk stockings, Alanna. You could get on much faster, and get a better job."

Alanna's bluebell peal of laughter floated up and down Howard Street and many people turned to see from whom that joyous sound came.

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"Sure I was thinking to get a better job with my head, and not with my feet," said Alanna.

"Your head, too, to be sure," said Norwegian Jenny, "and for that very reason you should have your hair bobbed."

Alanna seized one of her long braids in each hand and held them tight. "Not I!" she said. "Haven't I been nearly fifteen years raising this hair? What would I be chopping it off now for?"

"To look smart," said Norwegian Jenny. "You should have seen me when I first came to this country. I was a freak. I looked queer, the way you do. But now"—here she looked down at her pretty high-heeled shoes, and shook her pretty bobbed head—"now I look as smart as the rest. You might just as well be dead as be out of style." Here Norwegian Jenny turned off onto Monument Street, and Alanna went on to Biddle.

Every day of the following week Norwegian Jenny urged Alanna to have her hair bobbed, offering her many and excellent reasons for it, but Alanna always hung back, and couldn't make up her mind.

"You'll attract more customers," said Jenny, "and that will attract Mrs. Farron's notice, and she will increase your wages. And really, Alanna, if you dressed better and bobbed your hair you would be a good-looking girl, and that, you know, would give you a feeling of . . . of . . . well, of always being in the right."

Alanna revolved these things in her head, and finally told Jenny she would see what Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy thought of it. And going home on Saturday she went around by way of the market to get Rose Parsons' advice. It was a cold, dark

day, and Rose was stamping her feet to get them warm. When Alanna asked her advice she gave it readily.

"You might just as well look like the rest of the girls," she said. "If I were in a store I'd want to be like the rest in appearance, but being on a farm I can do as I please, and so I keep mine long. To get along in the city you've got to look like everybody else. I don't know how that ever started, but there's no getting out of it now. It's a shame to cut your lovely braids off. You won't look like yourself any more. Your aunt and uncle won't know you."

Alanna went home in a daze. "It's funny," she thought, "how you can't have your hair the way you want. Whose hair is it, anyway? And everybody does be saying what a free country this is—freer than any other. That's a quare kind of freedom. In Ballycooly, now, look at Mrs. Kilfoyle with a knob of hair on the top of her head, and Mrs. McCann with a knob on her neck, and Mrs. McQuirk with a wig. You could tell them apart the minute you laid your eyes on them, which is a great advantage. If you've been fighting with the Kilfoyle twins, for example—if you see a knob on top you can dodge."

At the supper table Alanna broached the subject. Did they like the short hair the girls did be wearing? Would they like it if she had hers bobbed?

"If your good manners don't go with the hair, I have no objection," said Aunt Judy, "but if you get to being smart I won't like it at all."

There now! Hadn't Norwegian Jenny said she ought to be smart? And now wasn't Aunt Judy saying she mustn't? Isn't it the quare world?

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Uncle Peter rushed in where a good many other angels would have feared to tread. What did Uncle Peter know about how girls should wear their hair? To tell the truth, not a thing. But he up and said, as if he knew all about it, that if hair was a good thing, and a pretty thing, why wasn't it the truth that the more you had of it the better off you'd be?

"Much you know!" said Aunt Judy.

This didn't help Alanna a bit and she looked very disturbed. Uncle Peter, hating to see Alanna anything but happy, tried what a joke would do.

"Alanna darlin'," he said, winking his eye jovially at her, "why wouldn't you cut off one braid, and then if you didn't like the looks on that side, you needn't cut off the other."

Uncle Peter and Alanna laughed together, but Aunt Judy looked as solemn as a judge and wouldn't condescend to laugh at a foolish joke. Presently she said, "Well, Alanna, suit yourself, but if you cut off your hair your own mother wouldn't know you."

Alanna's smile slipped off her face with lightning speed. Up she jumped from her chair and pounded the table with her two fists until the cups rattled uneasily in their saucers. Her face grew crimson and her eyes flashed.

"That settles it!" she cried, thumping and pounding. "It's funny I wouldn't be thinking of that first of all myself. And Miss Andersen and all the rest may go to Ballyhack, and I'll wish 'em good luck there! But to the day of my death"—here a tremendous thump—"I'll be keeping myself the way my mother will know me wherever I may be when she claps eyes on me, if it's in the Desert of Sahara itself, or the bottom of the Black Sea!" (Here Alanna sat down and tried to

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calm herself.) "And maybe I look like a freak, but what do I care!" (Here she burst into tears.)

"Alanna," said Aunt Judy, rather fiercely, "if that Norwegian person calls you a freak again, you . . . you . . . you . . ."

"Knock her down," said Uncle Peter. "Knock 'em all down!"

When Alanna went back to the store on Monday morning she had a sort of atmosphere about her. Just what it was the rest of the girls couldn't have told you if they had tried. It is what the ancient Latin people meant when they said "*Noli me tangerere!*" which is, in plain American, "Keep off!" All about her, like a cloak, Alanna had the keep-off atmosphere. She was just as pleasant, just as good-natured, and yet the girls no longer teased her about her long hair or her country clothes.

"What's the matter with Alanna?" asked the girl at the stocking counter. You could buy one stocking for a dime, but much good that would do you unless you had another dime to buy the other one.

"She's different this morning," said the girl at the handkerchief counter.

The girl at the candy counter, shoveling up a scoop of chocolate drops and letting them fall back again, said, "Kind o' stuck up this morning, she is."

"She has a grouch on," said the girl at the stationery counter.

"She's putting on airs," said Norwegian Jenny, who was peeved because Alanna would not do what she told her to.

And not one of them was right.

The truth was, that when Uncle Peter had backed her up

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by saying "Knock 'em all down!" she had been reminded of those two good fists of hers, that in Ballycooly had defended something or somebody more than once—och, many a time! Now she was ready to defend herself, and it was rather glorious to feel that she could do it.

"I won't actually treat 'em rough," she thought, "but I'll give them to understand that Alanna Malone is *somebody*, even if she *is* a freak. I . . . I'll show them what a fine sort of a freak I can be. I'll not be forgetting Joan of Arc. Sure, she must have defended herself times and times! I'll just keep her in mind while I'm selling these little dabs of toys to the children."

And so she did. And after all it must have been the atmosphere of the courageous young Maid of France that hung about Alanna like a shining halo. Mrs. Farron noted it, as well as the girls. "Alanna is beginning to grow up," she said to herself.

And she was right.

Alanna was growing up far too fast to suit Uncle Peter. When her fifteenth birthday came, in late December, he wished she were only five, so that they might have her so much longer. Once a month he took Alanna with him to the bank where he kept his money, and there her earnings were changed into a foreign draft which went to her mother. And if little Pat grew apace, and Larry's strength increased, and her mother looked less anxious about the future, it was because those foreign drafts, changed into pounds, shillings, and pence, bought more food for them all, clothed the boys, and paid the rent. If you'll do a little calculating you'll find that Pat is three years old now. He has outgrown his cradle

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and his mother has cut down Larry's old trousers for him, and he's running about the street of Ballycooly along with the other small childer, and gets into all manner of trouble and is extremely happy.

But, while Larry and Pat at home were waxing fat, Alanna began to grow thin. She missed the farm sadly. She missed those growing things and all the sun and air that went with them. She missed the market, with its piles of rainbow fruits and vegetables, its pleasant commotion, the air of friendliness permeating it from Big Dan down to little dark-eyed Tonio Balbi who sold papers there—the *Baltimore American* and the *Baltimore Sun*. Above all she missed her mother. One day, with a sudden burst of tears, she said to Uncle Peter, "I'm afraid I do be forgetting what my mother's face looks like."

She came at last to weary of the Five-and-Ten. Her rosy cheeks grew pale. When she looked gloomy Aunt Judy gave her a spoonful of sulphur and molasses and Uncle Peter took her to a movie. In the mornings while dressing she looked out her window upon a dreary sight—whole rows of backyards full of mud, and forlorn little groups of sparrows, now fighting, now huddling together on fencetops for warmth. From this her thoughts would fly to that little lean-to room whose window opened upon the climbing slopes of Hillside and the house where Stacey lived and a wide sweep of sky set thick with shining stars.

February passed with much dreary snow, March came in with blustering winds and went away weeping, and April of the lovely name came at last. A few dandelions set their golden discs in the ragged grass of the dingy backyard and one or two new girls appeared at the Five-and-Ten. Then

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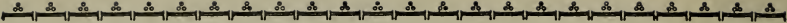
a bright spot came for Alanna in another visit to the Webster home. Here Mademoiselle also was pale and a bit spiritless. Mrs. Webster, looking at the two girls, realized that while some people can be transplanted from one country to another very easily, growing and prospering and making friends and homes in the new country, there are others who cannot be transplanted without wilting and pining, always with yearnings towards the old country and the old home. She believed that if Alanna's mother and brothers could have come to America with her she could have become a very contented American citizen. But poor little Mademoiselle! One couldn't very well fetch the whole country of France over into the Western Hemisphere without dislocating the map of the world, and maybe putting the pull of gravity out of joint—and yet nothing short of that would have satisfied Mademoiselle. Away off in Paris there is a tall, narrow house overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens, and in the little apartment up under the roof Grandmère is dying of loneliness for the "little one" who is earning the living of them both in far-away America. Mademoiselle sees that little bent figure in her mind's eye, and that is why, though she does her courageous best, she is always pale.

When Alanna reached home after that visit, and got down from the car before the Biddle Street house, she was in quite low spirits. She looked at the narrow little house, with the shop curtain pulled down because it was Sunday, and said to herself, "Barrin' Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy I hate that house and everything in it!" Aunt Judy, when she went in, would probably give her another spoonful of the sulphur and mo-

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lasses, and Uncle Peter would make a pun—and herself with her heart scalded with longings for Ballycoolly!

But it was not a spoonful of sulphur and molasses that Aunt Judy gave her when she went in. It was a letter. More than that, it was a letter that changed her whole life.



Chapter Sixteen

“Glory be!” said Alanna, and sat down to tear open the letter with eager fingers. Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter sat on the edges of their chairs, consumed with curiosity. They had seen that the letter had come from Ireland, but it was not in Larry’s childish handwriting. It was in a firm and fine handwriting, indeed.

“We don’t know who can be writing that at all,” said Uncle Peter.

Alanna went on reading to herself.

“We’ve been wondering and wondering,” said Aunt Judy.

Alanna went on reading to herself.

Aunt Judy frowned and Uncle Peter sighed. As Alanna read her eyes grew more astonished and delighted, and at last she looked up and said, “Will ye listen to this now?” (Would they!) Alanna began to read the letter aloud.

My Dear Alanna,

Stacey and I have just been down to see your mother, and she seems to be very well, indeed, as are your brothers also. But she tells me that your last few letters have shown signs of increasing homesickness—indeed, she read them to me, and I could see it very plainly myself.

It is this fact that emboldens me to make a suggestion to you, though I do not like the idea of seeming to be trying to get you away from your aunt and uncle, who, I know, must be glad to have you with

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them. Stacey is going to a school in Paris for a year. As the Dublin school is closed now on account of an epidemic of measles, she will go to Paris as soon as the Easter vacation is over. When she has had a year there her grandfather plans to take her traveling for another year.

You will see then, Alanna, that I shall be without Stacey for two years. I have no other great niece to take her place. Moreover Rosey, whom you may remember, is going to marry Johnny Kinsella and live with him in London.

Could you, my dear, and will you, come and take the double place that Stacey and Rosey will leave empty? You will have various duties to perform for me—read to me, talk with me, walk with me, travel with me, serve me my tea, before the fire or in the garden, according to the weather, and, in every respect, be my young companion.

Every Sunday you shall spend with your mother.

I shall give you a suitable payment in money, and also that other payment in affection which your warm nature commands. But I would not wish you to come if you are doing well and are happy where you are.

Always your friend,

ANASTASIA FITZGERALD

During the reading of this letter Alanna's eyes grew bigger and bigger, and the expression on her face changed from mere curiosity to a solemn ecstasy. This was too great an occasion for smiles and happy ejaculations. It was an occasion rather when one feels numbed as well as exalted. That is, Alanna felt humbled and exalted. Uncle Peter felt humbled and overcome. Aunt Judy felt raging mad.

"What sort of a creature at all is this, that would be stealing our niece from under our very noses?" she cried.

"It's a hold-up!" said Uncle Peter.

"It's an outrage!" exclaimed Aunt Judy.

"She's an angel!" said Alanna warmly.

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For a good half-hour the battle raged, but in the end Aunt Judy and Uncle Peter represented the "dead and wounded" that are always left on a battlefield, and Alanna victoriously went upstairs to think it out alone.

Seating herself by the window and keeping her eye on the one or two dandelions in the yard, she determined to look this thing squarely in the face with strict impartiality. It was difficult to do this when her whole heart rushed towards Bally-cooly and Hillside like a spring torrent rushing towards the sea. She admonished herself to be calm. She fixed her mind on Uncle Peter to start with. Wasn't he the darling? Sure he was! Wouldn't he be heartbroken if she left? Sure he would. Who would walk down to the market with him any more? Aunt Judy, for some reason, wouldn't go near the market. Who would go to the movies with him and laugh over the funnies and weep over the tragedies with him? Not Aunt Judy, who couldn't endure them. Poor Uncle Peter, with his kindly face and shabby coat and his puns—and nothing to do! That was the worst of all. Uncle Peter had nothing to do. Och, she couldn't leave him!

Aunt Judy, now. Aunt Judy's ways were firm and determined, but it was the good heart she had. Look at her putting all that money into the bank for Alanna. Always wanting her niece to look neat and well-dressed, which was just what Alanna wanted herself, too. Aunt Judy, who ran the little shop so well, and took care of the house, and cooked the things that Uncle Peter and Alanna liked to eat, and who loved Alanna so fiercely. Och, she couldn't leave her!

But Aunt Anastasia, with her fine face and fine heart and fine manners; Aunt Anastasia deprived of lovely Stacey and

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all alone—barrin' the housemaids and cook and footman and chauffeur and a few others. What did a footman with his wooden face know about serving tea for Aunt Anastasia? It's just as well that Johnny Kinsella was carrying off that Rosey with her ruffled apron that handled things so gingerly, the way she did with Pegeen. Sure Alanna herself would roll up her sleeves and wade through mud knee deep for Aunt Anastasia. Och, she'd have to go!

And her mother, with no husband to take care of her and the children and be bringing home his wages every Saturday that came. And little Pat coming along and needing trousers and schooling. And the winters so cold and the black frost killing the pitaties, and her mother needing a daughter to stand by her and pour wages into her lap. And her mother with the glad smile on her face when her only girl did be steppin' in on her every Sunday morning. Och, Mother jewel! And Larry . . .

Alanna leaped upon the word Larry as that same drowning man we mentioned once before (and who is still drowning) would catch at a straw, and tumbled pell-mell downstairs with it.

"Uncle Peter! Aunt Judy!"

Alanna stood still with a sharp recoil that nearly knocked her over. There sat Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy just as she had left them, Uncle Peter with his shoulders hunched, Aunt Judy with fire in her eyes. They hadn't moved a muscle or blinked an eye. They were stiller than still. They might be in their pew at church—or at Quaker Meeting even!—and they so still.

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"Uncle Peter! Aunt Judy!" repeated Alanna on a louder key. "I have just thought of something!"

Uncle Peter was still. Aunt Judy was still. Were they frozen, or petrified, or something?

"Listen!" said Alanna. "There's Larry, you know. Larry!"

They looked at Alanna, so they must be listening. She picked up her courage and went on briskly.

"Larry's a fine lump of a lad, believe me! Me being fifteen, Larry must be thirteen. The way he has the strong muscles on him does be one of the wonders of the world. I give you my word he'd rather be working than resting. Sure, if you were back on the farm"—here a big sigh from both those stiff, grave figures—"he could run the farm himself. He's a good lad, is Larry. You'd like him better than you would me, he's so pleasant and peaceable. Me, times I get raving, but Larry never. And I could go back to my mother and send Larry to you."

Alanna's voice fell away. She felt a little wilted. What was she doing giving away Larry when he wasn't hers to give? What would her mother say to having Larry given away and herself not even asked? Alanna sat down, feeling the need of moral support and taking a chair, which was all there was to take. And there the three of them sat, staring at each other gloomily.

Suddenly the doorbell rang. It was not an electric bell. You couldn't stand at the front door and push a button and make it buzz. It was an old fashioned bell, as old as the house, hung upon a coiled spring. At the front door you pulled a great white knob towards you several inches, the coiled spring (on the kitchen wall) vibrated, and the bell rang cowbell-fashion.

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Alanna rose up, glad of a diversion, went the length of the little narrow hall with its strip of yellowish-brown oilcloth, passed the shop door, and opened the front door. And right here I promise that the coincidence that is going to take place when Alanna opens the front door is the only coincidence, likely or unlikely, that you are going to stumble upon, or over, in this story.

Alanna opened the door, and there stood Uncle Roddy and Larry!

Alanna's mouth fell open with astonishment and she put her hand to her head with a feeling of dizziness. Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy, sitting mournfully in the little stuffy dining room, heard a loud silence, followed by Alanna's voice crying out, "Uncle Roddy! Uncle Roddy! Take me home!" And then the sound of weeping.

We'll just use a little tact and wait out in the hall until the excitement has died down somewhat, and then we'll go in. By that time Aunt Judy and Alanna will be in the kitchen getting supper, for in spite of startling coincidences, we must eat. Aunt Judy stirred the dish on the stove and tried to avoid looking at Alanna. Alanna wiped her eyes and tried not to look at Aunt Judy.

Well, at last the five of them were seated around the suppertable. What wonders are accomplished by a good meal! Even tears can be dried by Aunt Judy's delicious sally lunn. Sally lunn? Why, that's a wonderful concoction—a cross between a giant muffin and a cake—that Maryland people from ancient times have always stirred up when guests are expected. You very nearly have to say a prayer over it when you put it in the oven, to keep it from falling. When it falls it is like a left-

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over omelette, but when it rises and stays there it is like a dream of a feather bed. There were also honey and preserves brought from Honeysuckle Farm, and Larry fell upon all these good things and ate until his skin was tight. Larry was just at the eating age, you must remember, so we can't blame him. Aunt Judy didn't blame him. Against her will she was inclined to like him. For he had just such another snub nose and merry grin and pair of honest eyes as her little Michael had.

But besides good things to eat, there was a great powwow at that supper-table, in which all of the five people concerned grew excited and made speeches and told each other to be calm, and thumped on the table. And in all this Uncle Roddy was both dictator and peacemaker.

"Judy," he said firmly, "your sister Anna has got to have Alanna. Her heart is perishing for want of her. And here she is sending you this fine boy. What more could you want?"

The fine boy blushed warmly and shuffled his feet.

"But how do we know but what in another year Sister Anna will be perishing for want of Larry?" asked Aunt Judy grimly.

"Yes, how do we know?" echoed Uncle Peter.

Here Uncle Roddy beat his fist upon the table and what was left of the sally lunn fell promptly.

"I'm telling you, Judy, and I'm telling you, Peter, what's the right thing to do. Haven't you had a good year of Alanna? Be thankful for that! And Larry's of the same breed as Alanna. In time you may be loving him even more than you love her."

Aunt Judy snorted and Uncle Peter groaned.

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"Say what you will," cried Uncle Roddy, "I'm going to take Alanna home to her mother! There's the finest of jobs awaiting her, right there within a stone's throw of Ballycooly. Would you deprive the girl of this fine opportunity? Take shame to yourselves! Pretending to love her! She's *got* to go. Just put that into your pipes and smoke it! Or, if you can't do without her, sell your place here and go back to Ballycooly where you started out."

Aunt Judy looked at Uncle Peter. Uncle Peter looked at Aunt Judy. A tiny idea that they had had in the backs of their heads (strange places, those backs-of-heads!) and that from time to time had stirred restlessly, now stood up and became suddenly a full-grown idea. Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy ruthlessly crushed it back.

"And besides," went on Uncle Roddy, "why not give Larry a chance? Sure Larry's an ignorant lad, not knowing the world at all. A little city life over here will show what's in him."

Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy began to leave off looking at Alanna and took to looking at Larry. Och, the poor boy, he was so embarrassed! Alanna's hands were clenched together until the knuckles were white. And then it was that Uncle Roddy left off being a dictator, and taking his fiddle from its bag, tucked it under his chin and became a peacemaker. He sang, on a quiet and steady tone, of home.

"'Tis a strange little place,
Is home.
Sure, it's a warm cuddling-place
For the childer,

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And a great place entirely
For the parents.
Aye, bedad!
A place to make the angels themselves
Envious!

"Its walls keep out the winds
That do be blowing . . . blowing;
The windows let in the sun
That does be shining . . . shining;
And its doorway is wide
To saints and beggars
Alike.

"'Tis a great thing to travel
All the width of the world.
'Tis a great thing to follow
Rivers to the sea,
And the sea
To the world's end.

"But all the valleys and hills,
All the rivers and seas,
All the dusty highways,
All the little green paths
That do be twisting and turning
About the meadows,
Through the fields,
Around the hills,
And into and out of
Great cities and little towns—
Ah me! Ah me!
Each and all and everyone
Leads us at last
Home!"

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At this point Uncle Peter straightened up and asked a question. "Uncle Roddy, do we Irish folk hate the English people still the way we were doing a while back?"

"When you get to my age, Peter boy," said Uncle Roddy, "you'll find hating is as hard work as any there is. Me, I haven't the strength for it. The finest men in all the world are policemen, and if they're not Irish they're English. Look at them in Dublin and New York the lovely lads they are. Well, they're no worse in London. Hating, is it? What's the use?" Here Uncle Roddy struck into a rumble of notes that sounded like the roar (a little subdued) of automobiles on a hard city street. Winking at Larry, he began to sing:

"Look at the dictators now,
That do be ruling Europe,
Saints keep her!
Spain has one,
And Italy,
And Poland,
And there may be,
For all I know,
Baby dictators growing up
In all the other countries,
Keen to be at the business
Of dictating!

"Look you now,
The very greatest of dictators
Is the London Bobby.
At every street corner in London
He stands,
In the sun,
In the rain,

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In the dreary fog.
Sure, it's all one to him,
The creature!

"His right hand
In its big white glove
Is raised to stop
A million autos
And ten million pedestrians.
His helmet
Is seven feet up in the air,
His rain-cloak
Hangs from his shoulders,
His feet
Are firm upon the earth,
And his heart
Is exactly where it ought to be."

Then Larry made his first remark.

"I'd like to see the inside of a skyscraper."

"Boyeen," said Uncle Peter, "I'll show you one myself tomorrow. One, is it? I'll show you plenty!"

"But," said Larry in embarrassment, "I've torn a lengthy slit in the seat of my trousers."

Aunt Judy seized her thimble and said, "Come here and turn over my knee and I'll see what I can do."

After that, of course, Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy felt as if Larry belonged to them.

"Alanna," said Uncle Roddy, who now was sure that Alanna belonged to him, "would you mind, my dear, going back across the ocean in the steerage, you that came over here so fine in first cabin?"

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"I'd not mind a little thing like that!" said Alanna, who had no idea what steerage meant.

"You wouldn't? Steerage is down low in the ship where the rats are."

Alanna shuddered. "But no matter, Uncle Roddy, you'd be there."

Well, you may be sure it was very hard now for Alanna to keep her mind on the toy counter at the Five-and-Ten. By this time she had been six months at the Five-and-Ten, and on the whole had done fairly well there, though she had made some blunders and had broken some of the toys. Every day she had arrived a few minutes ahead of time, and in those few minutes she had arranged the counter in a new way, sometimes in a rather fantastic way, as when she made a border of jointed wooden snakes all around the edge and a ferocious Jack-in-the-box in the middle, and marbles arranged, according to color, in a rainbow arch. Mrs. Farron was inclined at first to forbid this, fearing that the girls at the other counters would want to do fancy rearranging too. But the other girls were entirely content to laugh at Alanna's displays and keep their own in the usual order, so Mrs. Farron said nothing.

Of course, since Alanna was so soon to leave America, she must be buying some gifts to take home. Uncle Roddy and Uncle Peter both volunteered to go with her and help her select them, and so the three of them, on Alanna's next afternoon off, sauntered out together.

"I read a book once," said Uncle Roddy, "called *The Three Musketeers*, and we seem to be it, this afternoon."

"A book is one of the things I want to buy," said Alanna.

"Is it for Tim it is?" asked Uncle Roddy.

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"It is for Stacey," said Alanna.

"Sure now, Alanna, what did we come along with you for if it's a book for a girl you're buying? What do two old men know about books for girls?"

"Old yourself, Uncle Roddy," said Uncle Peter, "but me, I'm only middle-aged, and besides, I know all about buying books for girls. Isn't it so, Alanna?"

"It is," said Alanna, and squeezed his arm.

"Come along then, and I'll take you to the best second-hand bookstore in the city," said Uncle Peter briskly.

"Oh, Uncle Peter, this book has to be new and very splendid," said Alanna.

"New it is," said Uncle Peter, and turned in another direction, "and splendid it is." He felt quite a little crestfallen, however, as he led the way to the big bookstore.

"Alanna," said Uncle Roddy as they were entering the store door, "do you know what kind of a book it is you want, and the name and everything?"

"I know exactly," said Alanna.

They went inside, a little overawed by the splendid profusion of books about them on every side. Brisk clerks were waiting on customers, and their very briskness was disconcerting to the three. Alanna spied a white-haired customer looking over a shelf of books near at hand, and arguing that he wouldn't be so brisk and disconcerting as a clerk, she went up to him and touched him on the arm.

"If you please . . ." she began.

The old man, who had had his back to her, turned about at once, looked at Alanna, smiled warmly, and said, "Why, if this isn't my young friend Alanna!"

Chapter Seventeen

*I*t was Grandfather Chester. He took off his glasses, polished them, and put them back on his nose.

"Alanna," he said, "thee's in one of the pleasantest places in the city of Baltimore."

"Yes, sir, but . . ." said Alanna, and turned her head to see where Uncle Roddy and Uncle Peter were. They, seeing that Alanna had met a friend, fine-looking entirely and all of seventy if not more, had backed away until they were almost backing out the door.

"Wherever there are books there is good company," went on Grandfather Chester.

"Yes, sir, but . . ."

"Has thee come to buy . . ."

Now it was Alanna who interrupted. "Wait a minute, Mr. Chester! I want to introduce my uncles to you."

With that Alanna went and got Uncle Roddy and Uncle Peter and made the introduction the best she knew how, and it seemed to be entirely satisfactory, for they all shook hands with each other warmly, and Grandfather Chester congratulated Alanna on having such a strong bodyguard to go shopping with her. Thinks Alanna, "Joan of Arc had a bodyguard for a time," and this reminded her of what she was in the store for.

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She told Grandfather Chester she had come to buy the best *Life of Joan of Arc* that could be found in the store.

"How will thee know when thee has found the best?" asked Grandfather Chester.

"I won't know which is best," said Alanna, "but I think maybe I will know which one Stacey will like best."

Grandfather Chester asked a clerk to fetch all the lives of Joan of Arc they had, and the clerk brought five or six and spread them upon a table. You should have seen the four of them selecting! Uncle Peter advised the one with Boutet de Monvel's lovely pictures. Uncle Peter was not much of a reader, but he was fond of pictures, and the one in this book of Saint Michael appearing in golden glory before Joan quite fascinated him. Uncle Roddy chose the one by Mark Twain because he had read it once years before. Grandfather Chester inclined toward the one by Anatole France because it was so complete. Alanna wavered about among these three choices, and then made her own independent choice. She opened one by a Frenchman, translated into English. The first sentence fired her imagination—"Joan came into the world on a galloping horse." What a gallant way to come into the world, when most of us are born into cradles, which can do no more than rock! Alanna would have that and no other. This would be a royal gift for Stacey—a gift planned for long ago when she used to put a penny now and again into a match-box hidden in the old manger in her little room at home.

"Alanna," asked Grandfather Chester, with twinkling eyes, as they left the store, "if we were in thy home town now, in the middle of the afternoon when we are all tired and thirsty, what would thee do?"

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"I'd be wettin' up a cup o' tea for us all," said Alanna.

"Exactly!" said Grandfather Chester. "And now, as this is *my* home town, I shall ask you all to have a cup of tea with me in my favorite tea room, not far off."

It was indeed near at hand, and they sat about a little table and had tea and sandwiches and pretty little cakes that looked as artificial as flowers on a hat. The tea room was run by a half-dozen Quaker girls, and they themselves waited on the tables, dressed in simple lavender dresses, white aprons, and white "kerchiefs" about their shoulders.

Grandfather Chester told about his library at home, where, he said, he lived the days happily like the lazy dog that he was; Uncle Roddy told of some of his adventures on the sea and in strange lands; Uncle Peter gave some expert advice on the raising of crisp white celery; and finally Alanna loosened up her tongue and told about her experiences at the Five-and-Ten. And so excited did she become that her elbow knocked Uncle Roddy's teacup from the table and it smashed upon the tiled floor.

"Och, the great omadhaun that I am!" she exclaimed, and her heart sank to the very pit of her stomach. Well, why not? If your heart can be in your mouth with fright, it can certainly sink to the pit of your stomach with embarrassment. Alanna could have cried to think she had been so awkward. But Grandfather Chester did not seem to mind it in the least. Indeed, before the pretty young waitress had had time to gather up the pieces of the broken cup, Grandfather Chester had managed to knock off his glass, and that went to smash, too.

"Well, well," he said, "I'm a great omadhaun myself! Look what I've done!"

Just at that moment four boys came in and sat at a little table near by, talking lacrosse and being very much excited over it. Alanna was absorbed in hoping that Aunt Anastasia would let her wear a lavender dress and white apron while waiting upon her, but Grandfather Chester looked at the boys and presently nodded and smiled at one of them. Curious Alanna must needs turn around to see who it was. It was John Watkins. Up jumped John, came over and shook hands with Grandfather Chester, said "Hello, Alanna!" and was introduced to Uncle Roddy and Uncle Peter.

"Alanna's out buying gifts for her friends at home," said Grandfather Chester. "She's going home in a couple of weeks."

"You are?" John asked Alanna. "Don't you like this country?"

"Yes, I like it," said Alanna, "but I can like two countries at once, and my own a little better than the other."

"Well said!" said John. "I know only my own country and I therefore like it better than any other. Where are you going when you have finished your tea?"

"To the Five-and-Ten," said Alanna. "All my Ballycooly friends are poor, and they wouldn't be liking me to give them fine presents. But they will like the things I buy for them at the Five-and-Ten. I'm going to buy something for everybody in Ballycooly. There must be thirty people altogether."

"Need some help selecting thirty presents?" asked John. "The fellows and I will drop around when we've had our sundaes."

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"Come right along," said Alanna, "and hurry, because it's getting late."

"We'll be there long before you've bought the store out," said John, laughing, and went back to his friends.

"There is just one more fine present I wish to buy for my mother," said Alanna as the four of them rose and left the tea room, "and I'd be glad if you would come too, Mr. Chester."

"Alanna," said Grandfather Chester, "I have already made up my mind to make a day of it, so lead the way."

"It is you that must lead the way," said Alanna. "I want to buy a picture for my mother."

"What kind of a picture, my dear?"

"A picture of Abraham Lincoln."

So the four of them went to a picture store, selected the picture unanimously, and left it to be carefully wrapped and sent to Miss Malone, 244 West Biddle Street. Alanna began to feel important.

When at last, coming up Charles Street and turning into Lexington, they came to the Five-and-Ten, there were those four boys, their faces bright with mischief, awaiting them. Alanna, looking around at her escort of three men and four boys, felt a little alarmed. What would Mrs. Farron think? And Norwegian Jenny and the rest of the girls? However, taking Uncle Roddy's hand for moral support, she walked boldly in. If the truth must be known, Grandfather Chester had come because he had been a bit afraid that the boys, three of whom sat quietly enough before him at Meeting on Sundays, might have some mischief brewing in their young heads. A Quaker boy is usually a well-meaning sort of chap, but that

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isn't saying he wouldn't be playing tricks if he had a chance.

You may be sure that Norwegian Jenny and the rest of the girls looked with keen interest at this group made up of Alanna, three sober men, and four irrepressible boys. Mrs. Farron, coming out of her cage on business, considered it best to stay out until this group had left the store. There were not many shoppers in the store, and they were scattered about at the different counters, but presently, strangely enough, it seemed that they all wanted to buy something at the counter near which Alanna and her now formidable bodyguard stood.

"Alanna," said John, "if you'll name the people of Bally-what's-it's name, and tell their ages and everything, we'll be able to help you make a selection of presents that will do you proud."

"Well," said Alanna, naming them as they came into her mind, "there's Pegeen and the twins and Thady and Rose and Granny Lally . . ."

"Hold on! Not so fast! We'll fix Pegeen first. Is she a lady or is he a gentleman?"

"Yes, we wouldn't want to give him a box of rouge if he's a gentleman," said one of the boys.

"Or a box of carpet tacks if he's a lady," said another.

"Pegeen's a little girl getting on for ten," said Alanna.

"Righto!" said one of the boys. "I speak to select the gift for Miss Pegeen."

"If it was for me," cried a little ten-year-old customer standing at the toy counter, "I'd like a yellow balloon."

"Nothing doing!" said the boy. "If you please"—this to Norwegian Jenny, who had joined the group with the idea of

taking command of it—"what have you suitable for a young lady of very particular tastes?"

"A diamond ring," said Norwegian Jenny, her sharp blue eyes dancing and her fair hair seeming fairly to crackle with electricity.

"Did you mention a Granny by any chance?" asked another boy of Alanna.

"Yes," said Alanna.

"This way, young man!" called one of the girls. "Grannies are very partial to candy."

"But Granny Lally has no teeth," began Alanna.

"Make it marshmallows, then," cried the boy.

The fun waxed fast and furious, and more or less witty remarks and ancient threadbare jokes filled the air. When the fun began to be too boisterous Uncle Roddy took a hand.

"SILENCE!" he shouted over the laughing din.

Silence prevailed at once. Alanna, who had her mouth half open, shut it promptly. Norwegian Jenny smothered a giggle in a feather duster. The boys put their hands in their pockets and spread their faces with an air of innocence. And (if you can believe it) Mrs. Farron finished up the bit of amused laughter she had (somewhat unwillingly) started in upon.

"Lads," said Uncle Roddy, "the people you are selecting gifts for are real people; they are not jokes. They are people who have almost nothing except their big hearts. If you visited their simple homes you would be treated with courtesy and hospitality."

The boys sobered down at once, and for some unknown reason Grandfather Chester and Uncle Peter suddenly shook hands.

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"Alanna herself is one of them," went on Uncle Roddy. "Is Alanna a joke?"

At this the boys made the most honorable amends they could think of.

"What's the matter with Alanna?" roared John Watkins.

"SHE'S ALL RIGHT!" shouted the others.

Alanna accepted the apology.

"That's right," said Norwegian Jenny. "We'll give Alanna's friends a square deal. I'm going to send the little Pegeen girl the prettiest necklace in the store."

After this the boys would have sent three or four personal gifts to each individual in Ballycooly, but Alanna would allow no one but herself that privilege. She had an anxious time counting up the Ballycooly people on her fingers, and at last decided to take a few extra gifts for fear she had forgotten somebody.

"Alanna," whispered Uncle Peter in her ear, "oughtn't you to be buying nicer gifts from one of the big stores for them all?"

"I wouldn't be putting on such airs!" said Alanna. Then she bought a little American flag for Pat, and the buying was over.

As they parted Grandfather Chester said to Alanna with twinkling eyes, "The twins are not twins any more."

"What else could they be?" asked Alanna.

"Triplets!" laughed Grandfather Chester. "The third member is invisible to us, but entirely visible, apparently, to themselves. It all comes from the story I read from the Bible one morning. They call themselves Shadrach, Meshach, and To-

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bed-we-go. The invisible third is To-bed-we-go, since that is something they never like to do themselves."

After that the days were crowded. There was one day that Alanna spent with Rose Parsons, during which the two of them visited Mrs. Jake. Alanna, indeed, gave Mrs. Jake over into Rose's care, bidding Rose keep her clean and see that the windows were not boarded up any more. Leaving Mrs. Jake, they went up towards the house and saw Crusoe standing dejectedly in a furrow. Alanna threw a stick at him, but even that did not brighten him up.

"He's missing Uncle Peter," said Alanna with a sigh.

"He's getting old," said Rose with a laugh.

There was the morning when Alanna went to say good-by to the market, which she did thoroughly and mournfully. There was the day she paid a farewell visit to the Websters, made the acquaintance of the invisible To-bed-we-go, and gave Grandfather Chester her dictionary.

"Alanna," he said after thanking her, "two famous men, one on your side of the Atlantic and one on ours, lived almost from the beginning to the end of the seventeen hundreds. One of them wrote this dictionary."

"Yes sir, Sam-u-el Johnson," said Alanna promptly. She had looked at the name just before she handed him the book.

"And the other?"

"I dunno."

"Benjamin Franklin," said Grandfather. He took a little notebook from his vest pocket and wrote a note in it. Alanna could not see what he wrote, but we can. "Send Alanna the autobiography of B. F. at Christmas time."

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"How many people there are," said Alanna with a sigh, "that I've never even heard of."

On the day that she bade good-by to the Five-and-Ten Mrs. Farron kissed her, and Norwegian Jenny said, "Alanna, you're a freak all right, but you're a good sport, too."

At last the day of departure came, and lest we hear the sighs and sees the tears of Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy, let us hurry along to New York and get there in time to see the *Tormania* sail, with Uncle Roddy and Alanna waving from the steerage stern rail, and saluting Liberty as they pass her by.

"Seems to me," said Alanna, "that she's looking the wrong way. Did I be up there on her stand I'd turn around and light the city with my torch."

That first night out Alanna felt a double gloom descending upon her. It was gloomy enough to think of all the American friends she was leaving behind her and whom she would doubtless never see again. It was gloomier still to lie in her narrow bunk shivering lest a rat might at any minute climb up upon her and look her in the face! But she fell asleep at last, and slept so soundly that a whole army of rats might have looked her in the face and she not know it. In the morning, however, that sinking feeling of *leaving some-place* left her, and the rising feeling of being soon to *arrive somewhere* was already beginning to take its place. Of course, there was that guilty feeling she had about not loving Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy enough to want to live with them forever, but that feeling, too, was soon over. Alanna's feelings of guilt were always acute, never (praise be!) chronic.

There were not many people in the steerage. On the Atlantic

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it is when a ship is Westward-Ho-ing that the steerage is crowded. But there were a few people who, like themselves, were going home. They were people who had gone to the land of opportunity, had cut off for themselves (as though it were a pie) a wedge of that opportunity, and now were going back to share its results with the folks at home. Always there is that longing, conscious or unconscious, for the little home, no matter how poor, where one's cradle was rocked. Alanna had not stayed long enough to cut much of a wedge off the golden pie.

Sometimes in the evening the young people danced on their small space of deck, while the older ones sat about admiring them. Sometimes there were scraps of conversation accompanied by lively gesticulations. And sometimes they all sat quiet, wondering whether it would be easy or hard to connect up again with the old life. Here was a young Italian who had been a hotel waiter in New York for several years. Could he be happy again on that little farm in Italy where his father plowed with two great white oxen and his mother worked in the harvest field? That Polish lad, who has had his schooling in Chicago—when he goes back again to the banks of the Vistula River will he ever wish himself back on the shores of Lake Michigan? Who can know?

And Alanna? Is she going to be satisfied with that simple little home in Ballycooly, and with that hard-working mother who knows nothing of the world outside of County Kilkenny? Who can say? But as she has been only a year away, perhaps the deep well of her loyalty to home has not yet had time to become shallow.

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It was on the second evening out that Uncle Roddy, very quietly and without being asked, drew his bow across his fiddle and began to sing:

Out-along I went, along
By the banks of Shannon;
Out-along, out-along,
A-sail upon the sea.
Och, a roving life
Was everything,
Everything to me!

"Up-along and down-along
I wandered from my homeland,
Seeing in strange city streets
All that I could see.
Och, a roving life
Was everything,
Everything to me!

"Years have passed and years have passed
And still I am a-roving,
Still a-traveling, still a-seeing,
Weary as can be.
Just a little glimpse of home
And childer
Would be everything to me!

"Now it's home-along and home-along!
Sea-foam at the ship's prow,
Sea-winds in the rigging,
Salt tang of the sea!
Och, home-along
And home-along
Is everything to me!

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"Music is the sea-gull's song!
Fair the winds, fair and strong!
Homeland and the childer
Soon shall I see!
Och, home-along
And home-along
Is everything to me!"

Before they knew it the ship, cleaving its way so steadily through the sea, came one morning into sight of Ireland's green shores. Nearer still, and now they were in the waters of Cork Harbor, with Power Head to starboard and Crosshaven on the port side. And at last they were landlocked by the greenness of Cork County, with Queenstown just ahead.

It takes much longer to get off a big steamer than to get on, but finally Uncle Roddy and Alanna were standing upon the dock with that castoff feeling that a traveler has when he is thus unshipped. Alanna was revolving in her head the question "Does there still be Little People in Ireland or have they gone out of fashion entirely?" and Uncle Roddy was thinking of the railway tickets for Kilkenny, when suddenly up came a young man in a neat chauffeur's costume, tipped his hat, smiled a wide and cheerful smile, and said to Alanna, "Miss Fitzgerald's compliments, and her car is here to take yourself and your uncle home."

Alanna stared at the smiling face. Could this be Johnny Kinsella? No, of course not. Johnny is in London. Who then can it be at all?

"Tim Riley, is it yourself?"

"Who else would it be?" said Tim, shaking Uncle Roddy's

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hand warmly—even painfully—and remembering that Uncle Roddy had been the making of him.

To Alanna's eager questioning he answered yes, that he had been Miss Fitzgerald's chauffeur ever since Johnny Kinsella had left for London, and (laughingly) that now, if another war (saints forbid!) should come, he could drive any old contraption of a car to the front. As he said "the front" his chest went out several inches, straining his closely buttoned jacket. Thinks Uncle Roddy, "For Tim's sake, and for the sake of all young lads, let the rear be so peaceable that a front will never again be necessary."

Alanna, like a small pea in a big empty pod, sat inside, and Uncle Roddy sat in front beside Tim. Alanna, with her feet on her suitcase, and with feelings of all kinds in her heart, and her heart threatening to come up into her throat and choke her, looked at the dear, familiar country as they sped through it. Happening to look down at the suitcase, and remembering how she had clutched it anxiously on that other June as though it held the jewels of the world, she gave it a push with her foot and broke into a merry laugh.

Said Tim, hearing that laugh, "Sure, that's just the way Alanna used to laugh."

Said Uncle Roddy, "That's because her heart hasn't changed. Alanna's laugh always comes out of her heart. There be those that laugh with the head, and och wirra! there be those that never laugh at all."

Tim pondered this for three full miles.

And now, in mid-afternoon or thereabouts, they reached the town, and Alanna begged to be let out for a few minutes at that shop where she had bought her new clothes a year before.

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Uncle Roddy and Tim, being men, were curious (as all men are) to know what she wanted in that little shop, and she coming from a big sizable place like Baltimore where fine fancy stores are on every street. But Alanna went in without a word out of her, and was gone for quite a little while. Neither Uncle Roddy nor Tim knew that not a cent—or perhaps I should say not a penny—did she have in her purse. She was as poor arriving home as she had been setting out for America. And yet, when she came out, musha me! she was dressed in a blue calico dress, a white apron, and bits of yellow ribbon on her two long braids. She had bargained away her silk dress—Aunt Judy's last gift to her—for these things. Uncle Roddy and Tim looked at her with such surprised eyes that she felt obliged to make an explanation.

“Did my mother not know me, and me coming home to her, I'd give up the ghost and die. Now then, Tim, get along with yourself, quick!” Tim got along quick, and inside of a few minutes Alanna was in her mother's arms.

That evening, as once before in this story, all the folk of Ballycooly were sitting at their front doors hoping that Roddy Kilroy (the creature!) would tune up his fiddle and give them a song or two. This time the two big Lally girls, Biddy and Eileen, were at home on a week's leave, each with a rose stuck in her hair, and they as pretty as the roses themselves. And one who had been present on that earlier occasion was now no longer there. But Patrick Malone was not forgotten. Alanna and her mother were both remembering him with a sharp pang at his absence. Larry, too, was not adorning the landscape, but how he was adorning the hearts of Uncle Peter and Aunt Judy!

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At the Tracy house a new baby was bobbing his little head on his mother's shoulder. Brian and Peter were having a pleasant fist fight, the omadhauns! Pegeen was all eyes, like an owl. Tim, sent down from the Big House by Aunt Anastasia to help celebrate Alanna's home-coming, sat on the gate post, but decorously, being careful of his fine clothes.

At the Malone house door Alanna in blue calico and her mother in black calico, sat side by side on two stools, holding hands. Little Pat paraded up and down before them waving his American flag. He had counted the stars on it painstakingly with one small forefinger several times, and had a different number of stars at each count. Thinks Alanna, smoothing down her dress, what matter does it be making, after all, whether your clothes are made of the snowy-white fistfuls of cotton lifted up by lordly cotton plants into the bright freshness of the summer sun and air, or from the sticky cocoons of lowly worms that have stuffed themselves, like the little gluttons they are, on their favorite leaves in the trays where they squirm and eat and now and then shuffle off their too-tight skins?

As before, the Ballycooly folk became restless, and Mrs. McQuirk, who was the readiest talker, said at last, "Mr. Kilroy, now, wouldn't ye be giving us a little tune or two? 'Tis long since we've heard one from ye."

"'Tis the only thing that keeps me here," said Uncle Roddy, and stood up on his stool (little Pat has destroyed the chair entirely) and sang, while Ballycooly tapped its feet (all but the new Tracy baby) and nodded its heads (new Tracy baby and all) and pounded its canes, to keep time.

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"Glory be, Alanna's home!
Put on the pitaties
To boil!
Wet up a cup o' tea!
Wash the childer's
Faces!

"Give her the best stool,
And the warm place
By the fire!
Give her the uncracked cup
And the saucer that's not nicked!
Bless you, nothing's too good
For Alanna,
And she at home again!

"All the creature-things
From Black Molly
Down to the least of them—
The beetle in the dust,
The snail on the fence,
The worm in the furrow,
The bee in the clover,
The spider in his gossamer web,
The grasshopper,
The caterpillar,
The dragon-fly,
The ant—
'Glory be!' they cry,
'ALANNA'S HOME!'

"The Little People know it well,
The creatures!
And they slipping about
In the moonlight,

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Hiding behind shadows,
Dodging the fireflies,
Tumbling over dreams
Dropped by unwary sleepers,
Cheeping among themselves
In their little dabs of language,
And hastening to the
Leprechauns
To be getting their
New shoes
To dance in their
Fairy rings
And shout
'ALANNA'S HOME!'

"Whist now!
Alanna's mother knows!
She that rocked Alanna's
Cradle,
And spanked that little
Slip of a girleen,
And took pride to herself
For the tall, upstanding lass.
Alanna's mother knows,
She that did be wearing out
Her heart
Grieving for her child.

"Alanna's mother knows,
And she leppin' up and down
The street of Ballycooly,
Telling the good news
To Mrs. McQuirk,
And Mrs. Tracy
And the little Tracys,

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And Mrs. McCann
And the little McCanns,
And Mrs. Lally
And the little Lallys,
And Mrs. Kilfoyle
And her big lumps of childer
[Here the fiddle laughed]
And Mrs. Riley
And Tim and the little fellas—
'Och, glory be!' says she,
'Have ye heard?
ALANNA'S HOME!'"

A silence followed this song, and out of the silence came Alanna's voice asking, "Oh, Uncle Roddy, does there be Little People in Ireland yet, and myself away so long?"

Uncle Roddy said, "I wouldn't wonder," and the Kilfoyle twins shouted, "Sure there be!" and Tim Riley said, said he, "All you've got to do, Alanna, is to sit out on your doorstep any moonlight night, and if you don't see them themselves, sure you'll see their little silver shadows and they coming right up to eat out of your hands!" and Pegeen danced herself up and down crying, "I've seen 'em! I've seen 'em!"

Then the Ballycooly folk began clapping their hands, wanting another song from Uncle Roddy. And while Uncle Roddy is slipping his fiddle anunder his chin, let us slip away ourselves, with the sound of the clapping in our ears. We, too, are just a bit glad that Alanna is home. There are quare places in the four quarters of the globe that are called "home," but mostly they're safe, warm places for the childer to be. If Alanna should ever go away again—och, wirra! perish the thought!



